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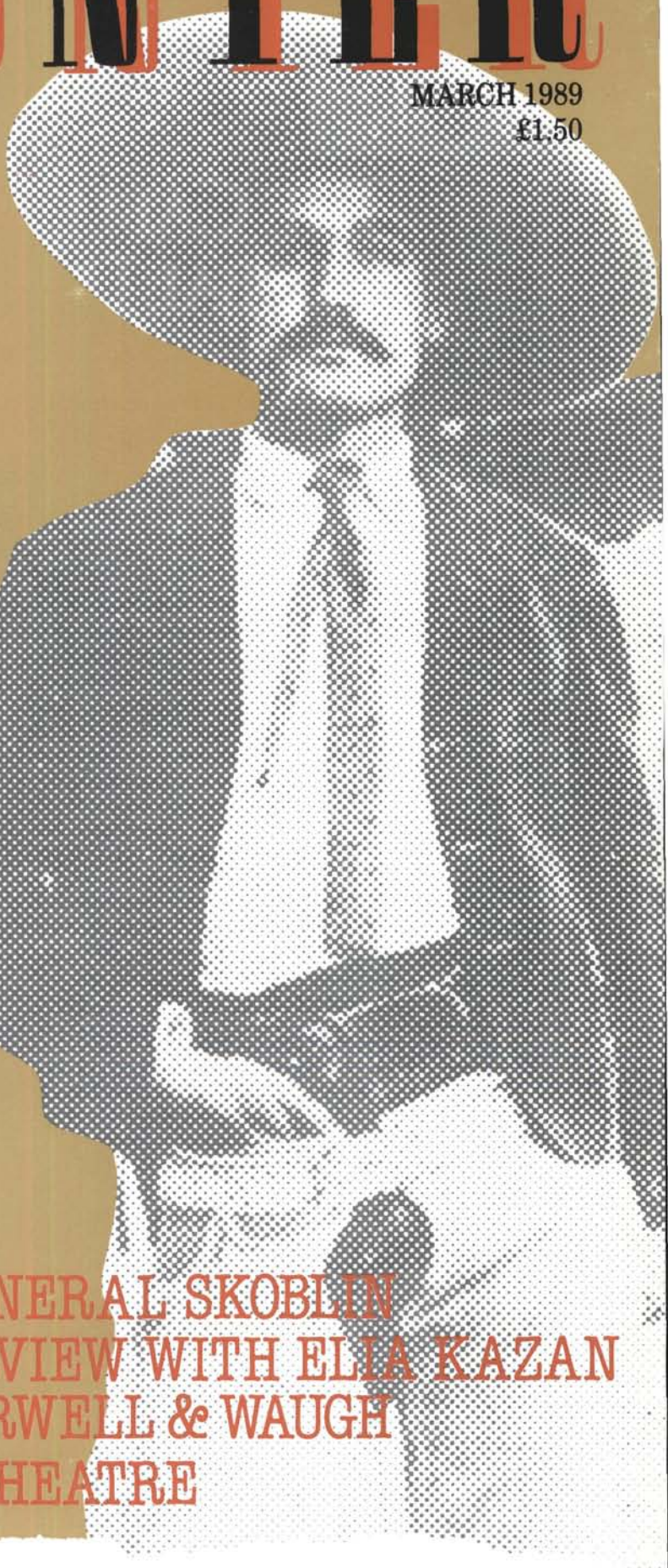

REVOLUTION

THE MAKING OF MODERN MEXICO?

BY JOHN HEATH

WALTER LAQUEUR:
THE STRANGE LIVES OF GENERAL SKOBLIN

CHRISTOPHER COOK: INTERVIEW WITH ELIA KAZAN

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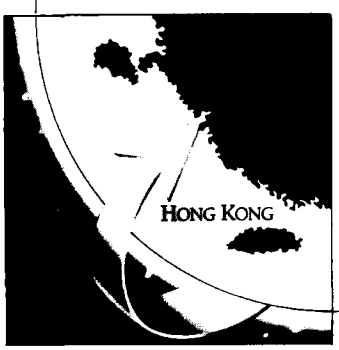

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John M. Heath

The Institutionalised Revolution

On the End of Mexico's Popular Myth

WHEN ANASTAS MIKOYAN, then one of two First Deputy Prime Ministers of the Soviet Union, visited Mexico in 1959—the first by any Soviet Minister—he is reported to have talked to Manuel Tello, the Foreign Minister, about the achievements of the Russian Revolution of 1917. By all accounts he was politely reminded that Mexicans had nothing to learn about revolutions; they had had theirs first, and nobody wanted another. Tello might well have added that Marxist ideology had had nothing to do with it either.

Briefly stated, a revolt—primarily inspired by a rising middle class and displaced peasants from the northern states of Sonora and Coahuila, and led by the liberal Francisco Madero—was launched on 10 November 1910 in the name of the Mexican people against the government of General Porfirio Diaz, who had been in power for 34 years. The battle-cry was a time-honoured call for "Effective Suffrage and No Re-Election [of a President]", to which had been attached a plan for agrarian reform. Somewhat to everyone's surprise, the coup succeeded; but when Madero, in his subsequent negotiations with the remaining Porfiristas, reneged on agrarian reform, the backlash was to cause his downfall. He was assassinated in 1913 at the hands of General Huerta, who then assumed dictatorial powers and took over the Federal Army.

Ten years later, after seemingly endless skirmishings, pitched battles, and seizures of power among regional factions (in which most of the rival leaders such as Zapata and Carranza were killed), the first official commemoration of the revolt finally proclaimed its triumph, and one of Carranza's generals, the talented Alvaro Obregon, took office as President. Meanwhile, the country in the north and in the central area (the Bajio), where most of the fighting took place, had largely been devastated and was in a state of economic collapse. More than a million people (about 10% of Mexico's population at the time) had lost their lives.

Not that the Revolution was quite over even then, although Obregon's Bucareli Agreements of 1923 (which gave some consolation to American investors) and the end of Puerto Carillo's socialist take-over régime in Yucatan symbolised a turning-point of sorts. For most people, though, the effective end of the Revolution came in 1929, after the suppression of the *"Cristero"* revolts (which Graham Greene took as the setting for two of his novels, most notably *The Power and the Glory*) and the assassination of General Obregon. Under the auspices of the tough General Plutarco Calles, an official political party, which incorporated the main sectors of Mexican society—the peasants, the military, the "popular" sector, and a new fourth estate, the labour sector—was formed. It was this which in 1946 became known as the *PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional)*. For some, the Revolution ended even later, in 1940, when General Manuel Cardenas decided not to stand for a second term as President, and the principle of "No Re-Election" was finally established; a civilian, Avila Camacho, took office.

AFTER ALL THE BLOODSHED, destruction and confusion—in which ideologies of any kind seemed to play so small a part, and personal loyalties, special interests, and the prospect of gain a great deal—what did it all add up to? Had it really been, as Francisco Madero had initially assumed, and local leaders such as Zapata had seemed to exemplify, a grassroots revolution against capitalism and landlordism, with agrarian reform, free labour, and socialism Mexican-style as its main objectives? Or was it rather a social revolution, which by 1914 had been hijacked into a counter-revolution by opportunist *politicos* backed by military men under the banner of the worthy but uncharismatic old *politico*, Venustiano Carranza, who, having defeated the chaotic but ferocious forces of Pancho Villa, found himself at the head of the so-called Constitutionalist Government? The Revolution's latest major historian, Alan Knight,[1] has described the scene in 1916, in the face of a general strike, as a "pale autochto-

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[1] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* (2 vols., Cambridge University Press, 1986).

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nous Stalinism *avant la lettre*, with the revolutionary élite taking refuge in purges, repression and censorship".

Was this really a revolution anyway, in any accepted sense? And if so, on what model? The French Revolution, Louis Napoleon's "bonapartist" coup of 1849, the Spanish revolts of 1868-74, even the Italian *Risorgimento* have all been suggested as precedents (as if one were needed). Or, in such a vast and varied country, was this merely a localised civil war —a series of politically inspired conflicts which could only be called a revolution in the sense that over the years it had returned to the beginning, with the militaristic régimes of the "Sonora Dynasty", Presidents Obregon and Calles in the 1920s and Cardenas in the 1930s with their re-formed bureaucracies in the place of Porfirio Diaz and his *scientificos*? Had it simply degenerated, at worst, into a struggle between variously corrupt warlords, local *caciques* with shifting allegiances, and power-hungry politicians, to the accompaniment of a general public despair and disillusion, with almost everyone ending up as loser? Obregon is frequently quoted as saying: "There is no Mexican general who can stand up to a bombardment of 20,000 pesos"; while a young soldier of the time described it as "All that running around so that the general can drive about in a car with his girl".

Did the Revolution really achieve anything of consequence or of value for today's Mexico? After 60 years there is still argument, but at least some consensus. One thing is clear: the social and political upheaval which the Revolution engendered was much greater than in earlier Mexican convulsions—notably after 1810, the Civil War of 1857, and in the mid-1870s when Porfirio Diaz took power, not to mention the period of Maximilian's Empire of 1863-67. The same basic issues, notably the cry of "Land and Liberty", had often figured in an increasingly complex society with infinite traditional overlays.

Most of these problems were not resolved by the Revolution, and only some in its aftermath. But at least (though some landlords remained) the old self-perpetuating Porfirista élite was swept away, *scientificos* and all, to be replaced by younger men drawn from a much wider social spectrum. With a sense of service and a fresh determination to rebuild, they produced over the next 30 years imaginative and successful social reforms and programmes in the radical spirit of the Revolution, as they understood it. With the help of the business sector and foreign investment, they served to create the climate for the Mexican "economic miracle" of 1955-71. Though slow to take effect, the Mexican Revolution also produced major changes in social attitudes generally—less deference and regard for status, more resistance to regimentation, a greater sense of comradeship, and—perhaps most important in forging a new nation—a greater sense of national issues and interests among the general public, even in the remoter areas.

It is more or less common ground nowadays that, besides the Porfirista élite, the Revolution had the effect of destroying the semi-feudal, oligarchical *comprador* economic system of that period. During the years before 1910 much of Mexico's basic infrastructure had been built up, in large part with British and American capital and expertise (economic growth between 1895 and 1905 was particularly high). But economic management had become complacent and the system ossified; so the Revolution can be said, if only by osmosis, to have at least paved the way for the subsequent reorganisation of landholding, capital, and labour into new and much more dynamic patterns, in which, among other things, both profits for the capitalist and wages for labour acquired greater significance.

Whether or not the Revolution freed Mexico from her major dependence on the United States and gave her greater freedom of action not only in economic matters but in international affairs is more of a moot point. There are those who would say that Mexico's economic dependence is nowadays relatively greater than ever before. At the same time, in international affairs Mexico has since the Revolution always reserved the right to differ, sometimes very directly. (It was not so in the days of Diaz.) This tendency stems not from any real personal animosity towards Americans, but because of the brand of nationalism engendered during the Revolution, even though US investments there at the time hardly ever became direct targets. The strongly-held Mexican views on non-intervention in international affairs, applied most recently to US policies towards Cuba, Grenada, and Central America (notably Nicaragua), stem directly from US action in occupying Vera Cruz for a few months in 1914.

With the Revolution over, and a strong and increasingly organised governmental system beginning to develop at all levels, "forging the Fatherland" and "pursuing the Revolution from above" became the order of the day. Mexicans found they were back with the kind of paternalism they were used to; but it was paternalism with a difference. Not only did it offer peace and stability but it carried with it a rather convincing rhetoric which helped to create a climate of common endeavour and confidence in the future in the name of the Revolution. It was not so important that reforms might come slowly or not at all, or that arbitrary acts might still be occurring and abuses exist. The relative and in many ways remarkable success of subsequent régimes in promoting structural change, and in encouraging the development of a more open and dynamic society, against a background of better education and growth in technical skills in the process of industrialisation, together with rising living standards (especially for the middle class), proved sufficient to present and maintain the Revolution in the public image as a talisman of progress and national unity under a legitimate government.

It is unfortunate that—partly due to bad economic luck but more especially to admitted mismanagement and increased corruption in the period from 1971 to 1982—governmental rhetoric has been strained to the point at which cynicism has become widespread. Official plans and policies are nowadays seldom linked to any revolutionary appeal, although press headlines still contain revolutionary overtones. Perhaps time was due to eliminate this appeal gradually anyway: the Revolution is becoming a matter of history rather than personal experience as the older generation dies out. The main exception still is when election time comes round. Every public place and billboard becomes alive with slogans and appeals,

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mainly for support for the *PRI* candidate and the party of the Revolution.

The myth of the *PRI* as stalwart defender of the Revolution has perhaps been even more sedulously cultivated than the Revolutionary myth itself. As the accepted state party, the *PRI* claims monopoly of the revolutionary torch, and uses institutional methods to keep it alight. It was never designed to compete as a political party (though of course it now does so) but rather to integrate the disparate elements of Mexican society, under central control, for a common purpose. At election time those who support the *PRI* are not voting for specific measures from a party manifesto. (Policy matters are the preserve of the President *after* the election, subject to various internal constraints.) They are showing their faith in the Revolution and their loyalty to the Party as the sole executor of Revolutionary principles.

Although opposition parties have long been accepted in Mexico as part of the democratic process (though, until the 1988 election, with scant chance of achieving more than a few seats in Congress), votes for them are regarded by *PRI* stalwarts as by definition aimed against the Revolution and all it has stood for, and thus unpatriotic if not actually tantamount to treason. Remarkable as this may sound, there is indeed an element of genuinely held belief in the institutionalisation of the system. For if the *PRI* exemplifies the Revolution and its achievements, it follows that loyalty and discipline to it must be maintained.

Mexicans today generally think of the Revolution as a period of great confusion, of dearth and hardship. Most can compare their present material circumstances favourably with what is remembered of the past—even in the remoter parts of the countryside, there are nowadays likely to be found at least negotiable roads, piped water, a local electricity supply, and possibly a school or clinic. Education, from early days, lays stress on the benefits which the Revolution brought in its wake; and the corner-stone of it all, it is claimed, is the Constitution of 1917.

THE 1917 CONSTITUTION has to be seen in context. As leader of the Constitutionalists, whose generals had defeated the federal troops of the autocratic General Huerta but were themselves more regional conservatives than anything else, Venustiano Carranza had to see that a new Constitution was brought in to legitimise his position as *Jefe Maximato*. He summoned to Queretaro a specially convened congress consisting mainly of urban middle-class representatives; they were given a deadline to produce a text. The Constitution of 1857 (much of which had remained a dead letter) was resurrected; delegates were invited to add their own agreed proposals. Most of the discussions centred round the anti-clerical provisions, and it was only in the last days of the congress that, in a great hurry but in the most limpid prose, the momentous Articles 123 and 27 (relating respectively to labour and agrarian reform) were passed, with little chance for discussion. Carranza, it is said, followed the old Spanish vice-regal precept of "*Obedezco pero no cumplo* (I obey, but I don't carry out)." He did not worry overmuch about the actual contents of the new Constitution; he had his mandate. Even his supporters knew that nothing would happen in his time, and the public reaction was one of apathy.

From such inauspicious beginnings, however, emerged a Constitution which, as seen today, represents the most radical of its time. Article 123, in particular, can be said to represent the most enlightened approach in the world to the protection of labour, of its period. It provided that future labour legislation should include minimum wage provisions, a maximum eight-hour day, regulations for child and female labour, health and working conditions, and the abolition of debt peonage. Above all, it recognised the right to strike (except for government workers), and set up elaborate provisions for joint arbitration procedures. As to agrarian reform, the Carrancistas had already in 1915 promulgated their own Law to restore seized peasant lands to their former owners. Article 27, in a grandiloquent and egalitarian gesture, placed the rights of peasant communities over those of large estates, while reserving ultimate ownership to the State. Overall the new Constitution preserved the federal system, while accepting the freedom of the *municipio* to manage its affairs without federal restraint; it recognised the separation of executive and judiciary powers, reaffirmed the principle of No Re-Election, contained specific provisions for safeguarding individual rights, placed restrictions on the activities of the Catholic Church, and added a host of social welfare and economic reforms—which, as it proved, in effect gave the State considerably enhanced powers in ordering society.

THE PRIMARY AIM of the Constitution-makers was to remove long-standing abuses, not to provide a blueprint to establish any sort of classless or socialist society; it was many years before its most important provisions came to be implemented, even in part. But the Constitution of 1917 must be seen in hindsight as the great and lasting legacy of the Revolution. Unlike earlier Mexican Constitutions, which came to represent little except wishful thinking, it has in practice been largely followed up and executed—although not always in the sense that its authors may have intended.

To begin with, agrarian reform was inevitably subjected to many changes of pace. Obregon, in his Plan of Agua Prieta, had favoured small private properties as the basis for future landholding systems, rather than the *ejido* where traditionally peasants worked land held and administered by the local *municipio*. But it was not until 1934-40, during Cardenas's time as President, that land actually began to be redistributed on any scale. This was abruptly halted for a further eighteen years, until 1958 when under President Lopez Mateos the population explosion led to the breaking up and redistribution of more large estates. By 1970 the peasant population had increased to such an extent that there were actually more landless peasants than in 1910; yet in 1976 President Lopez Portillo declared that there was no more land to distribute. So while much has been done, much of the problem still remains.

Of many other continuing effects of the 1917 Constitution, three are worth noting. The anti-clerical provisions of Article 130 have remained to all intents and purposes a dead letter,

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being by tacit understanding subject to the "good behaviour" of the Church—as seen by the Government; and so far, despite much mutual suspicion, the understanding has held. On the other hand, the provisions safeguarding the economic sovereignty of the nation, enshrined mainly in Article 29, were so widely drawn as to lend themselves to many, often conflicting, interpretations, not least in offering justification for the indefinite protection of Mexican industry. In more recent years this has been damaging to competition, and to Mexico's ability to export other than primary products.

Article 29 has also been invoked over the years to give the State control over industry in the public sector, which has grown, often uneconomically, at the expense of a dwindling private sector. In the 1930s it was, of course, used by Cardenas to justify selective expropriations of foreign (mainly British) business interests, especially railways and segments of the oil industry; and by Lopez Portillo in 1982, when he nationalised the banks in order to limit capital outflows. Both measures, needless to say, led to a massive and long-lasting loss of confidence on the part of both foreign investors and domestic sufferers. By contrast, the provision limiting foreign investment to a minority share and controlling foreign ownership of property has proved, despite some evasion, a major and necessary safeguard against the domination of the Mexican economy by the United States.

The deals which the labour leaders have been able to make with the Administration under the benevolent shadow of Article 123 have (with one exception, in 1958) enabled Mexico to enjoy an absence of labour trouble which has been the envy of her Latin American neighbours. As the old-guard labour leaders fade away, however, there are signs that restiveness is increasing. This may well prove a major problem for the incoming President, Salinas Gortari, since current inflation rates have dramatically reduced real wages for most of the labour force.

THREE MAIN STRANDS distinguish the 1917 Constitution which, as heirs and guardians of the Revolution, every Mexican government has been constrained to follow as best it can, or to reformulate or reinterpret legitimately, as it chooses, in order to satisfy particular presidential wishes and ambitions, or meet unexpected situations. The first of these is the liberal tendency on which Madero originally sparked off the Revolution, involving maintenance of the rule of law, and of individual rights, effective suffrage, education, and anti-clericalism. Secondly, there is a commitment to social welfare in protecting the weak, especially the *indigenos* (the Indians), and improving living conditions, particularly for the poor. Finally, there is the nationalist element, which conceives of the State as the reactor to society, and defender of the national patrimony. It is on these latter grounds that the *PRI* rejects the view that it represents no more than the political arm of an oligarchy; it argues that under the Constitution it provides, with its ramifications throughout Mexican society, a consensus of views drawn from all sectors and at all levels, and is thus the servant of the people as well as its political master. Although this concept may be increasingly dismissed by its critics today as unreal, or worse, the constitutional sanctions remains. Whatever its pedigree, the Constitution is a sacrosanct reminder of the Revolution, which cannot be ignored or wished away by any Mexican.

It may be claimed that much of Mexico's economic development, particularly in recent years, would have occurred without benefit of revolution (which some maintain simply set back any sort of development, even in such a potentially wealthy country, by a decade or two). But the case cannot be proved. Other developments, notably in Mexican culture, certainly can be properly ascribed to the peculiar dynamic of the Revolution.

Many examples are still to be found of the astonishing murals of the 1920s by Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros, and Orozco, notably in Cuernavaca and at the National University in Mexico City. Their themes, in line with Communist intellectual thought of the period, illustrate past injustices perpetrated by foreign invaders (whether Spanish or American), exalt nationalism, and highlight the oppression of the poor and ignorant, and their liberation through the blessings of education. The Mexican Indian, to whom these gigantic symbols of the Revolution were primarily addressed, seems to have been singularly unimpressed; today these are mainly tourist attractions, along with the pre-Columbian pyramids and other relics of Mexico's fascinating past (only rather more colourful). Mexican literature, of which Carlos Fuentes's *—Death of Artemio Cruz* is just one example, gained from the Revolution a whole new ethic which is by no means ended yet.

On a lesser, but socially rather important plane, the gentle art of satirical caricature and the political joke, which was well established long before the Revolution, re-emerged after it as a sort of safety valve for life's frustrations but with perhaps less political and more social content. It is not really clear why this should have been so, except perhaps to exemplify the rise of an increasingly widely-based and confident middle class who enjoyed laughing at themselves while taking the stuffing out of the *politicos*. Caricaturists such as Rius and Abel Quesada daily provided wit even more telling than their American counterparts. The tradition lives on as an integral element in the post-Revolutionary scene—a force, in its uniquely Mexican way, for national unity.

As for popular music, Revolutionary songs and themes such as *La Cucaracha (The Cockroach)* have lost their appeal, except to tourists. They have been replaced by *rancheras*, popular regional folk music, endless songs of blighted love, and the latest musical imports from the United States. Present-day mass culture in Mexico, notably TV programmes, is inevitably strongly influenced by the US; and even the film industry, while not forgetting Buñuel's *Los Olvidados* of the 1950s, has largely lapsed into banality whenever a revolutionary subject is projected.

WHAT DOES the myth of the Revolution still have to contribute to the Mexico of the 1980s? The answer is probably "Not very much". Mexico in the last few years (and not for the first time) has been in serious economic difficulties, due not least to the need to service a massive external debt, and to lower returns

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as the price of oil experts has fallen on world markets. The period of the de la Madrid presidency which ended in 1988 has inevitably been a period of marking time against a background of high inflation and some strain within the Party structure, which manifested itself through a sharply reduced vote at election time. These uncertainties make it doubtful whether Salinas de Gortari (able as he undoubtedly is) will be in any position to do very much more.

Meanwhile Mexico is faced with major problems of employment in a population which has increased dramatically in the long years of relative prosperity and growth. Fresh political or economic initiatives invoking the spirit of the Revolution seem unlikely; Mexico will probably have to ride out the storm as best she may in the next few years, while tidying up her domestic problems. There are plenty of doomsayers, of course, who believe the nation to be in such a state of crisis that change of one kind or another will have to come—and in Mexico anything unexpected can happen.

In any future developments within the *PRI* (and it is here that schism could occur, notably from the labour sector), the Party may not be helped by its revolutionary background. Attempts by the Administration since 1977 to revive liberal democracy (by encouraging electoral competition, for instance, and reducing the possibility of electoral fraud) have come up against interpretations of Article 3 of the Constitution, which subordinates votes and elections to the protection of society's weaker groups. Similarly, in attempting economic *apertura*, which should increase Mexico's external trade prospects, the Government has inevitably found itself up against the commitments made long ago to industry under those provisions of the Constitution which relate to economic nationalism.

Such matters tend to be resolved in Mexico by deals of one kind or another (involving reciprocal benefits for those chiefly concerned) rather than by government fiat; but the going can be slow and the compromises inadequate. However, Mexicans have proved remarkably adept in eventually resolving past crises, and resilient in surviving them, whatever the suffering involved; and the same applies today even though the crisis is probably of a greater order of magnitude and likely to persist over a longer term. It may be that, to meet modern necessities, some changes to the revolutionary Constitution may eventually have to be made; or perhaps the constitutional provisions which today inhibit may be rather honoured in the breach. It remains to be seen.

One lesson of the Revolution must surely have been learnt—that violence on a mass scale, let alone any form of civil war, can never pay in Mexico. As in the Revolution of 1910, almost everyone would end up as loser. No matter how serious the situation becomes in the future, therefore, the days of *Mexico bronco*, the violent Mexico of popular myth, are surely over for ever.

Student Poet

She has been frequent at my classes,
a shy observer, dressed in elaborate black;
whenever I have slipped a sheet of paper
into her field of vision she has contrived
not to see it, preferring to read or dream.
But today she offered me poems, folded
in a lilac envelope ; "Please, take them;
promise not to publish with my name."

At home I study them. The lady tells
her truth in borrowed phrases, a love story
full of pain and tremulous questions,
much tenderness trusted to a leaky craft.
If she were wiser in the ways of words
she might have avoided the theme; other ages
spoke the language, ours has coarsened it;
"love" hints at fancy, lewdness, one-night-stands.

Brave though, to try. After all, what's poetry
to do with circumspection? Caution
navigates known ways, makes pretty waves;
"Such sensitive handling, delicate restraint",
not noticing the outboard motor failing.
True, her poems are clichés; what of that?
Within their echoes is a sweet voice singing.

Irene Rawnsley

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M. M. Carlin

The Dreadnought Plans

ON A CHILLY-ISH London evening of late October, in the year 1905, an error was made on the first floor of the Admiralty building in Whitehall. Later-than-office-hours gave the time-span of the error. After-hours gaslight, largely turned down, must have been largely the cause of the error. The error was a rare one in a dutiful career; also it was a small one (though its consequence was not).

What happened was this: a porter on his rounds, one Voe—Victor Frederick George Albert Bertrand Voe, aged 48 years—poured red ink into a blue ink-well, and changed the course of history.

Through long years at the Admiralty, this inadvertence was the first—as indeed it was the last—in the career of Victor Voe: something like a lifetime of meticulous devotion to the replenishment of inks, the refreshment of blotters, the knotting and sealing of brown-paper parcels, and the buffing and shining of leather and brass (the leather was over the heavy door-stops); also to the storing of sugar, tea and milk; also to the emptying of office waste into the cellar furnace below. It certainly did not cost this porter his position, nor yet his retirement pension. Rather the contrary, indeed. Obviously he could scarcely be commended, but his immediate superiors—and remoter ones too—were far from being displeased at his mistake.

As for his family, they were never clear about what exactly had been going on. Mrs Frances Voe, his wife, did understand eventually that her husband's confusing red with blue had considerable importance; and that it was, in some strange way, a rather clever thing to have done.

When Voe had completed that filling of the ink-wells, he proceeded to the collection of waste-paper baskets and then consigned the contents dutifully to the furnace downstairs. He had to make sure that no screwed-up pieces of paper escaped the furnace and lay on the floor. All blotting-paper must likewise be burnt—he had already done that, after his blotting-paper round. Victor Voe was a methodical worker, and this evening (it was the end of the week) his process was gradual indeed. He still had to wash the office tea-cups, and put out clean milk-bottles for collection. At last, when he had finished every chore, Voe made ready to depart. To understand all these matters fully, we must follow his movements in detail.

Voe took down from a peg in the cellar the following articles: a blue muffler, a bowler-hat that had lost its gloss, and a brown mackintosh with a copy of the *Daily Mail* in its pocket. These he hung in appropriate ways on his body—which was a very thin one, culminating in a large head (this head confidently carried, however). Then he turned off the last of the gas-jets and let himself out by the appropriate door. After nodding to the policeman on duty outside the building, Victor Voe walked to his tram-stop in Whitehall.

The evening traffic was still near to its worst, with the clopping of horses a positive thunder in the highway—all punctuated with the occasional toot and rev. Voe's tram now drew slowly near and it is necessary to describe it: The driver was wearing an old Boer War military overcoat, dyed a sort of khaki-ish blue; and one of his huge blinkered nags was a snowball—the sort that little boys, spotting horses, used to count. Thirty-six white horses in as many minutes was the record in central London; though of course it was lower than that in the suburb by the river where V. F. Voe was headed. The journey would take him nearly an hour, eastwards and southwards, over Lambeth Bridge; and he had to sit upstairs much of the way, breathing the pungent and acrid fog.

MRS VOE suddenly sprang to life when her husband was on the very threshold. She had fallen asleep in a basket-chair, and now she stood up, took up the stoveplate handle, and deftly levered a plate off the stove. A gas oven was beyond their means at this time; so she poked among the ash and dulling coals until she had uncovered a glow, then put in a little kindling wood. This stuff—thin-chopped deal plank—was sharp and rough to her hasty hands, and she got a splinter under one nail. But with gentle blowing she aroused the fire, and placed a number of small coals with delicate strategy amidst the flames.

Voe, Victor, had taken off his things and gone past the kitchen with his *Well-Mother-what's-for-tea?*—who called *Kipper-with-an-egg* in reply. "Aha!" said Voe, "*That's* nice." She heard him talking upstairs to their daughter Albertina, and then he came down and into the kitchen, where they spent the best part of their lives.

Your-tea's-a-bit-late-I-dropped-off, said Mother. Mr

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Voe did not reply. He was enjoying the kitchen cosiness; he had not had a chance to read his paper in the fog-ride; and now he unfolded it and refolded it, and reduced it to a small square. Tinkered with the gas, got a clearer light. Sat down at the kitchen table near the warmth, wearing his droopy brown allotment jacket. Gardening notes, advertisements, everything interested him; he was a great reader of the press.

The Voes lived in Shank Street, not far from the local Anglican Church, which both the elders attended on Sunday evenings. Victor Frederick George Albert liked a good lie-in of a Sunday; and so did daughter Albertina, who worked as a shop-assistant in Islington—but she did not go to church in any case, except for weddings, funerals, and christenings.

Their house was a terrace one, two up, two down, and getting to be quite a valuable property. The Voes had bought it 25 years before, and were still paying off the mortgage at two and six a week. The house carried an oblong pane of glass, stained yellow, in the middle of the front door, and a chequer-work of blue and red bricks over the windows. Shank Street was a fair neighbourhood, nothing too posh, but not common either. The number of the house was 27.

VICTOR FREDERICK was now studying his small square of the *Daily Mail*—the cross-word puzzle was it? He took an indelible pencil out of his gardening-coat, and began to make marks upon the page—a little faint, but it was no use licking the pencil: it would blot, and besides, he did not care for the practice. Such things reminded him of his nephew, a checker at the Pool of London, to whom he had taken a dislike.

"Albee", called Mr Voe.

"Yes?"

"When you come down, bring a pencil out of my jacket pocket, will you?"

"Right-oh."

Mrs Voe had put on more coal; had extracted the splinter from her finger; had washed her hands in cold water with yellow soap; dried them on the kitchen towel; and started to fry the kippers in lard, over the flame with the stoveplate off. *Albee-come-down-and-butter-some-bread,* she cried, breaking an egg over a cup-edge.

"Right-oh."

Mrs Voe smelt the egg to make sure it wasn't bad, then poured it into the pan held sloping away from the naked flame. Two more eggs and it was done, and she was spreading margarine when Albertina came downstairs, saying *Oh-you're-finished-mum-sorry*.

"You're always sorry. Never mind. Eat up."

They were, in fact, a happy family. They ate the kippers and eggs and bread-and-margarine, all of which were delicious. Ate more bread, with margarine and plum jam; then a slice of Dundee cake each; and a Marie biscuit, with margarine-and-sugar (and then another for Albertina, who could eat what she liked because she took after her father, not her mother, in that respect).

Her father had a prominent nose, rather knobbly, and her mother had a mole on her chin, with hairs in it. But her father's skin was rather fine, and her mother's nose was short and straight. Albertina combined the looks of both parents.

What did they talk about, the Voes of Shank Street? Well, they discussed their King, Edward VII; also the affairs of their neighbours; also (briefly), the recent war between the Czar of all the Russias and the Emperor of Japan. They were very patriotic, and Mrs Voe was still antagonistic to the French, who, until a short time before, had been held as a traditional threat and enemy. The Germans they regarded still as good fellows like themselves. Or so Mr Voe had said: for, in the evening of Waterloo, did not Blücher come to our aid?

King Edward himself was to change all that, finally, with his visit to Paris in the following year; when long and patient work by the French Ambassador would come to fruition in friendship with Great Britain. The Voes actually *said* "Great Britain" as a matter of course, and as if it were only one word. But they did not discuss politics or military matters for long. They took all that for granted—like the Admiralty.

Indeed, the career of Victor Voe was, to his family, no patriotic matter. He might as well have worked for a bank or an insurance company, and it is doubtful if Mrs Voe herself could have told the difference between any three such institutions. She poured them each a large cup of tea—very hot, very dark, and very sweet.

Afterwards, her husband finished his puzzle (Albee had brought the pencil down, a patterned green *Venus* HBB). Then he read a book. Mrs Voe and Albertina worked on a dress for Albertina's trousseau (she was to marry an extremely handsome young corporal in the Grenadier Guards); and they all ascended to bed at 9.30 p.m.

The book Voe had read (he read two chapters) was Joseph Conrad's latest—*Nostromo*—though he did opine aloud that he found it a bit strange; not as interesting as that writer's usual stuff.

So they slept in Shank Street: Mr and Mrs Voe warmed at the feet by two tall green glass bottles, tightly corked, wrapped in a vest, and almost filled with steaming hot water.

Propped up with her pillow, Albertina also read: a short story by O. Henry—about a young woman who sold her hair to buy a watch-chain for her husband, only to find that he had sold his watch to buy a comb for her hair. No, a hair-slide. Something like that.

OH, ABOUT the Dreadnought Plans—what happened was this: a certain senior secretary, the agent of a foreign power (who had hidden in a cupboard while Victor Frederick did his rounds), came

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out, produced some skeleton keys, pulled the heavy curtains to in the chamber of the First Lord of the Admiralty, and busied himself till far into the small hours tracing, in varying degrees of detail, the blueprints of Great Britain's revolutionary new warship. He finally emerged near to dawn, dodged the policeman on patrol, and carried home the copies of the Dreadnought Plans wrapped around his waist, next to the revolver which he always took with him on such dangerous operations. It was a Saturday morning, of course, and all the foreign embassies were shut for the weekend.

This proved to be a fatal miscalculation. For when the First Lord's suspicions were aroused, by a curling from a sharpened HH pencil on his carpet (the porter, Voe, was meticulous always), an investigation was set in motion; nor was it long before the truth was known, the traitor arrested, and the plans recovered.

You see, there had been two mistakes that evening—it was the era of gaslight, after all. The guilty senior secretary—one Anthony Harold Guy Duart Ludwig Mack-Heberden—had signed himself out as having left the establishment at 6.05 p.m. But the ink was clearly purple against the white register. For—as we now understand—Albert Bertrand Voe (or Vaux) had refilled the ink-wells after that time. Voe was a witness at the enquiry. Voe gave evidence at the trial.

Of course, he did not *really* change the course of history—though he must have affected it more than a little. And yet, who can truly say little, or much? That red ink poured in a blue ink-well might with some certainty have determined the odds between the British Grand Fleet and the High Seas Fleet of the German Kaiser; and the error committed by Victor Voe could well have secured, at the Battle of Jutland, the final command of the North Sea.

NOTE: *The first cross-word puzzle seen in England was not in fact published till twenty years later, at which time also the first football pools appeared. What Mr Voe was actually doing then, with the "Daily Mail" and his indelible and Venus pencils, must remain a mystery for 1905.*

By 1919, Albertina was remarried and Mr Voe's first grandson was 13 years old. At a later juncture, this lad was in the Royal Air Force—a bachelor of three and thirty summers, with a pipe.

Ann A'Gram's Diary

Rather than raise Cain
when falls the rain, I case
the bookcase for a poem
that won't make me mope.

I yearn for a good read
and a laugh; or dare
I kick over the traces,
knock back a few crates

of beer with a dishy male?
Not when I'm in the mood
to prophesy doom—
I'd be et up in the meal!

The snag about pms
is that not even MPs
can drug the pain
and so, of course, I nap.

This rain's a real pest
when I feel like this
but that's how it hits,
being so out of step

with poems and prose.
I'd rather raise Cain,
you know, than be a spore
and, believe me, I can!

Madeleine S. Brand

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Walter Laqueur

The Strange Lives of Nikolai Skoblin

Some Origins of World War II

THE STORY I have to tell consists of two parts, which are seemingly unconnected—except that the action took place in the same city (Paris) in the same year (1937), and the main figure was in both cases a White Russian General named Nikolai Skoblin. Although he was almost unknown outside the Paris émigré community, Skoblin suddenly became famous as the result of dramatic events. He did not remain for long in the limelight, but vanished from one day to the next, never to be seen or heard of again (except, of course, by those who had engineered his disappearance).

Even now, 50 years after the event, we know very little about Skoblin except that he appears to have been a double agent; but even this is not absolutely certain. If he *was* a double agent, it is not clear whether he acted as he did for ideological reasons, or whether money was the decisive consideration in this as in so many other cases. What we do know is that Skoblin—without perhaps being fully aware of it—played a part in one of the most murky affairs in the history of our time.

Interest in Skoblin has recently been reawakened in Moscow in the wake of various revelations concerning the Purges of the 1930s. At the same time, his name has resurfaced in publications in the West, although in a different context and—as I shall show—by mistake. As a result, there is a chance that at long last some new light may be shed on a fascinating and important issue: the connection between Stalin's Purges and the outbreak of World War II.

Curiously, not much attention has been paid in the past to the link between these events, but that there was such a connection seems beyond doubt. For the decapitation of the Red Army in 1937-38 not only affected the military power of the Soviet Union, but had a direct impact on its image abroad, since it seemed both less reliable as a potential ally, and less threatening as an enemy. It influenced British and French leaders—and also the United States—in their foreign policy decisions, strengthening appeasement policy up to Munich and beyond. It made Hitler and his generals more willing in 1941 to take risks which otherwise might have appeared unacceptable. Skoblin was a very small cog in a giant mechanism and it is ironical that his name should have recently been mentioned again in connection with an affair that never was—"the Eitingon case", to which I shall turn first.

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Among his recent articles in ENCOUNTER *are "Lermontov, or A Plot Exposed" (February 1988) and "How Not to Break the Silence" (January 1987).*

1. Skoblin, Miller, & Eitingon

IN ABYSSINIA STREET, a quiet thoroughfare located in the old part of New Jerusalem, a sign on one of the houses made it known to the neighbourhood that Dr M. Eitingon was practising psychoanalysis there. When I first saw this sign, in 1938 or '39, the major works on the history of the psychoanalytic movement from Ernest Jones to Peter Gay had not yet been published, and the importance of Max Eitingon as a member of Freud's inner circle was no more known to me than to most of Eitingon's neighbours. True, other doctors were aware of his presence, and he was known as a well-to-do man and a patron of the arts, including the Bezalel Museum. But in those days anyone who owned a house and a few thousand pounds was considered a rich man.

A few years later, but well before the end of the War, Eitingon died. I bought in a sale a tiny part of his library, though the bulk went to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where to this day a section is still named after him. All I managed to obtain was a few periodicals published by the pre-1917 Russian emigration. (I believe I still have them.)

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In the intervening years I had learnt the following facts. Eitingon had been born in Russia; when he was still a child, his family had moved first to Poland and later to Leipzig, where his father was an extremely wealthy fur-merchant.[1] Although neither a gifted speaker nor an accomplished writer or innovative theorist, Eitingon had played a role of some importance as a pioneer of the psychoanalytical movement—partly because of his generosity in financing, over two decades, most of its publications. He was the first to make this new therapy accessible to a wider circle of people, through the polyclinic he established in Berlin—where he practised medicine until his emigration to Palestine in 1933.

IN THE YEARS since his death, Eitingon's name was infrequently invoked, save by the editors of Freud's letters, by researchers into the highways and byways of the history of psychoanalysis, and by those who frequented the hall named after him in the Jerusalem National Library. A dissertation on Eitingon was presented at the University of Mainz in the late 1970s,[2] but this, as far as I know, was the only publication until, early last year, *The New York Times* Book Section published a long article full of dubious revelations.

Dr Max Eitingon, of Mohilev, Buczacz, Leipzig, Berlin, and Jerusalem, a psychoanalyst of modest fame, had apparently not only been one of Stalin's main *Killerati* in Western Europe in the 1930s, but also a spymaster, and an organiser of kidnapping and murder. The impact of the Eitingon gang of killers, it was argued, was probably "unequalled in the annals of murder". In Switzerland, they had assassinated Ignaz Reiss, a *NKVD* defector; in Paris, they kidnapped a White Russian General named Evgeni Miller and murdered Trotsky's son while he was in hospital; in Spain they had killed leading anti-fascists; and eventually, in 1940, they had murdered Trotsky in his Mexican exile. Above all, it was alleged, there was evidence that Max Eitingon had been instrumental in preparing the 1937 Moscow secret trial in which "the highest leaders of the Soviet Army . . . fell before the Stalinist execution machine".

All these crimes certainly took place. The most startling of them, perhaps, was the abduction of General Evgeni Karlovich Miller on 22 September 1937. An elderly officer, and chairman of the émigré Russian Military Organisation (*ROVS*) in Paris, he had gone to a meeting with two mystery men—and had never returned. Since seven years earlier his predecessor, General Kutyopov, had disappeared in circumstances which were never entirely cleared up, Miller had taken certain precautions. He left a letter which said that the meeting had been arranged by another White Russian General named Skoblin, and that a certain Vadim Kondratiev was also involved. When Miller did not return, the letter was duly opened. Skoblin was confronted with the evidence. He had no satisfactory answer; but since General Miller's colleagues seem to have been rather absentminded, and in any case had no power to detain him, Skoblin slipped away. . . .

NIKOLAI VASILEVICH SKOBLIN had served as a Captain during World War I, and had joined the White Army in the Russian Civil War. He rose rapidly; by 1920, when the war was over, he was a Major-General commanding a crack regiment, the Kornilovitsi. Skoblin played a role of some importance in exile politics in Paris, although from time to time certain suspicions were voiced. He was said to have lived beyond his known income, he sometimes associated with doubtful characters, and on at least two occasions he was openly accused of being a Soviet agent. Nor did he make any secret of his pro-Nazi sympathies, favouring closer collaboration with Berlin rather than with France. However, there were always a great many rumours and accusations in émigré circles, and few took them very seriously.

Skoblin's political career suffered no lasting harm from all this talk; he belonged to General Miller's inner circle and was privy to all his secrets. Small in stature and insignificant in appearance, he was far less well-known than his wife, the singer Nadezhda Plevitskaya. A phenomenal natural talent—the greatest Russian singer of her time—she has been compared with Chaliapin and, in a different context, with Gorky and Stanislavsky.[3] Plevitskaya was born in 1884, in a small village near Kursk in Central Russia, and had three years of schooling before joining a travelling circus, where her talent was discovered. Her rise to fame was rapid; within a few years she was to sing for the Czar and his family, and was adored by intellectuals and the common people alike. For most Russians of her generation, there was something divine in the art of this peasant girl, and yet she also embodied the creative genius of the Russian people.

During the Civil War Plevitskaya found herself at various times among the Reds and the Whites, and she sang for both. After her fall from grace she was accused of both "Black Hundred" sympathies and Bolshevik machinations, but in truth she was utterly unpolitical, and felt herself at home wherever Russian music was appreciated and loved. She continued to sing during the years of exile: wherever she went the Russian emigration sat at her feet—aristocrats, generals, workers, and peasants—and wept when they heard the nostalgic songs about their lost homes, their snow-covered villages, their Russian forests.

Nikolai Skoblin was her third husband. She loved him deeply, but seems to have been a somewhat jealous wife. He accompanied her on her trips and acted as her impresario, combining business with political missions on behalf of *ROVS*.

THE REASONS why General Miller was hijacked and killed are not entirely clear. As an ageing officer who tended towards caution and passivity, he was certainly no danger to the survival of the Soviet Union. Perhaps the Kremlin wanted Skoblin

[1] There still exists in Leipzig a maternity hospital named after the elder Eitingon.

[2] Emil Michael Johann Neiser, *Max Eitingon, Leben und Werk* (Mainz, 1978).

[3] See I. V. Nezhdev, *Zvezdy Russkoi Estrady* (Moscow, 1974), pp. 69-70.

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to replace him; if so the operation was a failure. Perhaps it was just another covert action, for the West European branch of the *NKVD* (predecessor of the *KGB*) was strong and had to flex its muscles.

When the trial against General Miller's kidnappers and murderers began in Paris, in December 1938, the only accused present in the courtroom was poor Plevitskaya. Skoblin and the other minor figures who were accessories to the murder of Ignaz Reiss and/or General Miller—Sergei Efron, Peter Schwarzenberg, and Vadim Kondratiev—had all disappeared.[4] Plevitskaya, who enmeshed herself in all kinds of confused and contradictory statements, was sentenced to twenty years hard labour—an unusually severe sentence for a woman to receive from a French court. Studying the trial now, at a considerable distance, the unprejudiced reader is bound to reach the conclusion that there was a miscarriage of justice. Indeed, Jean Belin, the French police officer in charge of the case, wrote in his memoirs (published after World War II) that ". . . we had no formal evidence of complicity on the part of Plevitskaya in this affair".[5]

There had been tremendous anger at the brazen kidnapping of General Miller, both in the Russian colony and among French officialdom. Since the real culprits were out of reach, the singer had to serve as a scapegoat and was given inordinate punishment for a crime which, in all probability, she had never committed. She was certainly not an evil spirit who had dominated and perverted a weak-kneed husband. She must have known, in a general way, that he was up to no good; but there is no evidence that she knew the details, nor was she directly involved in Skoblin's activities. (The fact that she was left behind to face the music is only one of many indications pointing in this direction.)

NOT LONG before Plevitskaya's death in 1940, she made a confession which, seen in historical perspective, rings true.[6] Skoblin, she said, had been a very ambitious man. After 1933 he had begun to conspire against Miller with both Nazi and Soviet agents; while he was on the run in Paris after the Miller kidnapping, he had come to see her for a few minutes and confided that he had engineered the abduction.

Plevitskaya made her prison confession on 10 May 1940—the day the Germans invaded Holland and Belgium. Within a few days, her tragedy had been overtaken by a far more momentous disaster, and the whole affair, so sensational at the time, was forgotten.

WHAT WAS THE LINK between the Russian nightingale, her rascally husband, and a rather obscure psychoanalyst in Jerusalem? Max Eitingon was a lover of the arts, especially the theatre—his wife, Mira Raigorodski, was a former actress with the Moscow Arts Theatre. In the 1920s they were living in Berlin and had come to know Plevitskaya who, with her husband, was a frequent guest at their soirées. Eitingon was a millionaire, and when he heard that Plevitskaya's income had shrunk in the immigration, he decided to give her a small monthly allowance. It is not known when this began, but it continued until about 1933, by which time Eitingon's income had greatly decreased. In other words, during the relevant period—the years before the Miller kidnapping and Skoblin's escape—Plevitskaya no longer received money from the Eitingons, except perhaps for the occasional present.

On Plevitskaya's arrest, her finances were subjected to close scrutiny and the Eitingon connection was revealed. Various letters from Eitingon and his wife were found. The correspondence was totally unpolitical and harmless, but such financial support not surprisingly aroused the French investigators' suspicions.

Maurice Ribet, the advocate who represented the Miller family, at first intimated that there had been a sexual relationship between Plevitskaya and Eitingon. However, he later changed his ground and hinted at some sinister political intrigue. After all, Eitingon's father for many years before the Revolution had made his money by exporting furs from Russia, and the business had been continued by the American branch of the Eitingon family. So there was a "Russian connection", however indirect. But this line of argument also led nowhere, and was dropped. The prosecutor then mentioned that Eitingon and his wife had been in Paris for a few days, on their annual visit to Europe, just prior to the Miller kidnapping. They had stayed in the Hôtel George V, had seen the Skoblins, and had telephoned them more than once.

WAS THERE ANY connection between the visit to Paris and the kidnapping? Ribet and some later writers suggest that Eitingon left Paris in a hurry. But—apart from the fact that Eitingon suffered from partial paralysis and angina pectoris, and could scarcely move anywhere swiftly—the allegation was simply not true. According to his German biographer, Eitingon returned to Paris in the summer of 1938, less than a year after the Miller kidnapping, to participate in a psychoanalytical congress. He would hardly have done so had there been

[4] Sergei Efron was married to the famous Soviet poet Marina Tsvetaeva; soon after his flight from France he was executed in the Soviet Union. His daughter Arina, a friend of Pasternak who also spent many years in Stalin's camps, staunchly maintained that her father was free of any guilt.

So did Vadim Kondratiev's son, in a letter to *The New York Times* in March 1988, following publication of the accusatory article. He did not deny that his father had been involved in the murder of Ignaz Reiss, but since (in his words) Reiss was selling military intelligence to Nazi Germany, there were apparently mitigating circumstances. Reiss (a Jew) had been doing nothing of the sort, but he did have information concerning Stalin's attempt at a *rapprochement* with Hitler, and Moscow had feared that he would reveal this. It is likely that the older Kondratiev was told that his help was needed to liquidate a Nazi agent. It is more difficult to understand why his son, living in the US, should still believe 50 years after the event that Reiss was indeed spying for the Nazis.

[5] Jean Belin, *Trente ans de Sûreté Nationale* (Bibliothèque France Soir, 1950).

[6] Nadezhda Plevitskaya died in Rennes prison on 5 October 1940. The confession was made to Jean Belin and other French police officers (*Trente Ans* . . . , p. 250). See also the account of her lawyer, I. Frenkel, *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* (New York, 23-24 August 1942), and B. Prianishnikov, *Nezrimaia Pautina* (Silver Springs, 1979), pp. 371-76.

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any danger of arrest or interrogation. (From Paris he went to London to see Sigmund Freud, for the last time.) In brief, if Eitingon was in any way involved, he must have been a man of infinite cunning, with nerves of steel.

The very idea that Eitingon had somehow master-minded or coordinated *NKVD* activities in Western Europe is, of course, fantastic. His interests lay in Russian culture, not in Soviet politics. Even if he had misled everyone by dissimulating his enthusiasm for Bolshevism over all those years, there still remained a basic logistic question. How could a sick, elderly man who lived in Jerusalem, and visited Europe for only two or three weeks each year, master-mind with General Heydrich and the Soviet secret police plots, kidnappings, and espionage activities on the highest level—except by telepathy and telekinesis?

In her prison cell, a little while before her death, Plevitskaya scribbled some notes which have somehow found their way to the Bachmetiev Collection at Columbia University. Dr Eitingon and his wife, she wrote, had been pleasant, generous people, lovers of the arts, and she found it stupid and wicked to drag them into the affair.

This should have been the end of the story—but there was yet another highly suspicious circumstance, and the *New York Times* writer of 1988 made the most of it. Dr Max Eitingon, he said, had acted all along on behalf of and in cooperation with his brother, the infamous *NKVD* General Leonid Eitingon. To have a Soviet secret service general as a brother naturally raises all kind of questions, although cooperation does not necessarily follow. (We all know of brothers who were bitter enemies rather than close friends.) Nor is there any evidence that Leonid Eitingon (who did indeed engineer the murder of Trotsky) had anything to do with the kidnappings in Paris or with the Heydrich affair.

The new theory—as Theodore Draper was to show in an article in *The New York Review of Books*—had a fatal flaw. Though Max Eitingon did have brothers and sisters, Leonid was not one of them. He was not even a half-brother, or a first cousin. The (Polish-) German and American Eitingons did not know the Russian Eitingons. Though much effort has been invested to show some sort of kinship between Max and Leonid, this seems to be true only *sub specie aeternatis*, in the sense that if one goes back far enough, it emerges that all mankind is somehow related.

HOW DID A MAN of noble character and integrity fall under suspicion of being a spy, a killer, a collaborator with the worst type of Nazi gangster? Because he had the misfortune to consort with the wrong sort of people. As a result, his name was entered in the police files, and once this had happened it became exceedingly difficult to set the record straight.

In not a few instances innocent bystanders have found themselves in a similar situation, although they never knew the likes of Plevitskaya and Skoblin. For instance, a few years ago the head of a CIA department commissioned a history of the *Rote Kapelle* (Red Orchestra), the most successful Soviet espionage network in Western Europe during World War II.[7] It had for a long time been common knowledge that "Lucy", the key figure and anchorman, was actually Rudolf Rössler, a German émigré who operated from Lucerne, in Switzerland. Most of his sources (some of them excellent) have, however, remained a riddle to this day. Great was my surprise when I found that this CIA history discussed in some detail Professor Max Horkheimer, head of "the Frankfurt School". Max (yet another Max!) Horkheimer (1895-1973), a native of Frankfurt, was for many years head of the Institute for Social Research (Frankfurt, Paris, California, and again Frankfurt), the author of well-known books on the dialectics of the Enlightenment and other such topics. In his younger years he had flirted with Marxism, but by the late 1930s not much remained of this political interest, and towards the end of his life it completely disappeared.

"THE HORKHEIMER LINK" was certainly intriguing, but there were insurmountable problems as to its credibility. The Frankfurt philosopher was a man of many parts, almost a polymath, but he knew nothing about things military, such as the difference between the German 8.8 cm anti-aircraft gun and the light field-howitzer 18 or the field-gun *M 97*. He would not have been able to tell the German tank model *P III* from the later *P IV*. And this was precisely the kind of operative information that the "Director" in Moscow wanted to know.

Furthermore, Horkheimer was in the United States (much of the time in California) throughout the War. Even if we assume that, on the shore of Santa Monica, he had through some miracle obtained information on the deployment of the German Army on the eve of the Battle of Kursk, how would he have conveyed it to Rössler in Lucerne? And then why to Lucerne, and not directly to the Soviet capital? There would have been a hundred more obvious conduits to Moscow.

Horkheimer, of course, was no more a master spy than Eitingon. His name (albeit somewhat mangled) appeared in the police files because someone—"Lucy" or one of his associates—had mentioned his name in an intercepted letter or telephone call as a potentially useful contact. It was clearly not a good idea and "Lucy" must have been hard-pressed even to consider Horkheimer in this context. Perhaps he just wanted to impress someone by invoking the name of a well-known intellectual whom he had probably never met.

The anonymous editor of the CIA history, after weighing all the pros and cons, sensibly reached the inevitable conclusion that "the Horkheimer link" was quite incredible, and was unworthy of further investigation.

But there is not always a happy ending. The egregious Peter Wright in *Spycatcher* (1987) tells the story of a Soviet refugee in Britain who came under suspicion because a *KGB* defector (Anatoli Golitsin) had brought information to the effect that a Soviet agent had been introduced into Suffolk, next to an airfield where batteries of the latest guided missiles were stationed. An investigation took place, and the suspect was

[7] *The Rote Kapelle: The CIA's History of Soviet Intelligence and Espionage Networks in Western Europe, 1936-1945* (University Publications of America, 1979), pp. 220-22.

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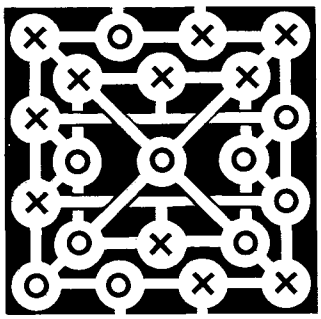
completely cleared. But shortly afterwards he and his wife left the area; the inquiries had leaked in the village and he wanted to make a new start. Wright comments that the story:

> ". . . has always had symbolic importance to me; an ordinary man suddenly falling under suspicion, and just as abruptly cleared again, his life utterly changed because of something a man he has never met says in a darkened room on the other side of the world. The quiet rural world of Suffolk colliding with the secret world of betrayal, where there is no such thing as coincidence, and where suspicion can be fuelled at the sight of an empty desk."

2. *Skoblin & The Generals' Plot*



MAX EITINGON had less luck than Max Horkheimer. Although nothing has been proved against him, some still believe that there is "room for suspicion", "no smoke without fire", and so on. But, apart from besmirching the memory of a decent man who was innocent of any wrongdoing, this particular wild goose chase may not have been entirely in vain. It touches indirectly upon an issue of enduring importance, which has been discussed on and off for decades, and (resurfacing partly as the result of *glasnost* in the Soviet Union) is now reappearing on the historians' agenda: Stalin's "purge" of the Red Army Staff in 1937-41, and the impact this had on the outbreak of World War II.

General Dmitri Volkogonov, the semi-official biographer of Stalin, said in a recent interview that Stalin hesitated for a long time before he proceeded from merely arresting his political enemies to actually engaging in mass murder.[8] Volkogonov puts the blame for this progression partly on Trotsky, who had published his *Revolution Betrayed* outside Russia, in 1936. In this book—which, in a translation by the *NKVD*, was handed to Stalin towards the end of 1937—Trotsky claimed (according to Volkogonov) that he had many supporters in the Soviet Union, in the Party as well as in the Army, and he promulgated the slogan "DOWN WITH STALIN". Stalin, says Volkogonov, was an exceedingly suspicious man and may have been taken in by Trotsky's "provocation". This theory is unconvincing; for one thing, the timing is all wrong. By the end of 1937 (when Stalin allegedly received Trotsky's book), two of the three big show trials had already taken place, and most of the accused—including the military leaders—had already been executed.

Volkogonov offers yet another explanation. At the same time Stalin had received information about a military conspiracy from both Right-wing Russian émigré circles in Paris and via Eduard Beneš, the Czech President. The fact that information was passed direct from Paris and that forged documents came from Berlin, alleging that Marshal Tukhachevsky, Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army, was involved with German military circles, has been known for a very long time. It was first mentioned in 1939, in *I Was Stalin's Agent*, a book by Walter Krivitski, a high-ranking defector from Stalin's secret service, and was confirmed soon after the War in the Schellenberg memoirs and a book by Wilhelm Höttl (both were leading members of German foreign Intelligence). Additional information has come to light in recent years from Czech and White Russian sources; even the names of the forgers and the go-betweens are no longer secret.

Walter Krivitski writes that Skoblin was the man at the centre of the *NKVD* conspiracy against Tukhachevsky and the other generals; Stalin, he says, knew that the "evidence" provided was disinformation of the rawest kind, and General Miller had to be liquidated because he was the only man who could expose the intrigue to the whole world. While that assertion seems most unlikely, the information was basically correct and has been confirmed by various other sources.[9]

THE QUESTION NOW ARISES whether material incriminating the Red Army was actually planted in Paris by the *NKVD* on Stalin's orders, or whether this occurred by way of some private initiative. The Russian émigré organisations did, after all, engage in political warfare against the USSR, and disseminated all manner of disinformation. Or perhaps the stories about an anti-Stalin military plot were the work of some enterprising journalist? But some Western authors for a long time certainly believed (or pretended to believe) in the existence of a military conspiracy.[10]

In Moscow, this was, after all, a period of constant ferment and trouble. During the permanent purge, with leaders disappearing from one day to the next, or unmasked as "enemies of the people", almost anything seemed possible. Among those who, even in later years, were convinced that there had been a conspiracy were such public figures as Winston Churchill— although, after Khrushchev's famous speech at the

[8] General Volkogonov's two-volume biography, *Triumph and Tragedy*, will be published in Moscow in 1989. Short excerpts have appeared in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, and long sections in the monthly *Oktyabr*. Volkogonov is Director of the Institute of Military History at the Ministry of Defence. He revealed in an interview that his father had disappeared in the purges, and on another occasion stated that he was neither pro- nor anti-Stalinist. There is every reason to believe that more historical material on Stalin was put at his disposal than any other author has so far received in either West or East.

[9] Thus, Krivitski says that the Russians had an agent at the very centre of a very influential group in Paris, the Gutchkov circle—it was Gutchkov's daughter. The story of Vera Alexandrova Traill has been related in considerable detail in a recent book by a French academic: see Alain Brossat, *Agents de Moscou* (Paris, 1988).

[10] Most prominently Isaac Deutscher in his *Stalin* (1949). Even in the new edition of 1960, despite all the evidence to the contrary, Deutscher stuck to the old version. Only in 1966, with much reluctance, did he modify his account. He still believed, however, that there had been some sort of plot against Stalin. The other major biographer of Stalin, Boris Souvarine, never shared this belief; in an article in *Contrat Social* (July 1959) he disproved the allegations of a conspiracy once and for all.

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Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, the affair should have been regarded as closed. If anything was amazing, it was the total passivity of the Red Army leaders—who must have been aware of what was in store for them. There should have been a plot, but there was none.

THE ORIGINS OF the conspiracy story can be traced back. The existence of a plot among Soviet marshals and generals had been mentioned more than once in the émigré press before 1937, particularly in Right-wing journals. A story ran in several instalments in Prague's *Znamia Rossii* during the first months of 1936, and in Paris *Vozrozhdenie* announced that Marshal Tukhachevsky had been a German agent ever since he had been a German prisoner of war in World War I.[11]

Who were the authors of these articles? And who inspired them? One of the instigators was General Count Ignatieff, the last Czarist military attaché in Paris, who was soon to return to the Soviet Union where, under Stalin, he became something of a celebrity. Another informant was Koltypin-Liubski, whom a French investigating magistrate described as an agent of the Soviet secret service, a contemptible character, *"un cynique crapule"*, who openly sold any information he could lay his hands on. The magistrate described him in almost poetic terms: *"La provocation est sa volupté physique."*

This creature had wormed his way into the confidence of Vladimir Burtseff, once the grand inquisitor and chief detective of the Russian revolutionary movement; he had unmasked countless Czarist agents, including the notorious Azev, and the Bolshevik Malinovsky. But Burtsev had become old and gullible, and he fell victim to a confidence trickster.[12] Lastly there was N. N. Alekseev, author of the article in *Vozrozhdenie*. He was another *NKVD* agent—"a *stukach*" (informant and provocateur), in the words of Roman Gul, who published a vehement reply in the same journal on 16 February 1936.[13] As Walter Krivitski boasted, the resident agent of the *NKVD* could publish in the Right-wing *Vozrozhdenie* whatever material he wanted.

Yet another relevant article, "The Soviet Union on the Road to Bonapartism", appeared in the semi-official German military journal *Deutsche Wehr*, but only after the event. Its author had no doubt that Tukhachevsky had indeed plotted against Stalin, but at the very last moment was betrayed. This article, which attracted much attention and was widely translated and disseminated, was signed by one "A. Agricola"—none other than the Russian-born Alexander Gustavovitch Bauermeister who, during World War I, was probably the most effective German spymaster on the Eastern Front.

"Agricola" said that every true Soviet expert knew that this had not been just a matter of espionage; it was a truly enormous military coup, in which the commanders of the most important military districts were involved. Tukhachevsky had made his first preparations in 1935, and zero hour was fixed for June 1937. Only owing to its betrayal by the infamous General Skoblin had the coup been averted.

"Agricola's" article greatly puzzled certain later Western observers. How had the Germans been induced to reveal for the first time what should have been a closely guarded secret?[14] Was it rivalry between the Army and the *Gestapo*? Did they want to dissociate themselves from Skoblin? Perhaps so, but there is an easier explanation. Skoblin's involvement in the intrigue had been mentioned before—for instance by Walter Krivitski in articles published in the émigré press before his famous *I Was Stalin's Agent* appeared. Since "Agricola" was a Soviet expert, he was obviously familiar with this literature.

There is (to put it cautiously) room for much suspicion regarding these publications. The campaign against Tukhachevsky was, at least in part, prepared and orchestrated by the *NKVD*—and it is unlikely that this could have been done without the knowledge of Stalin. General Volkogonov will not be able, I think, to shed much new light on this specific aspect of the affair. In a recent interview he complained that after the Twentieth Party Congress many files had been removed from the archives of the Soviet Ministry of Defence, and from Army archives. As for the secret-service files, it is doubtful whether Volkogonov ever had much access to these.[15]

LET ME NOW TURN to the second source of disinformation —namely, Heydrich and his *SS* secret service. I will summarise a long and complicated story.

Throughout 1936, President Eduard Beneš and other Czech leaders had been approached by various informants who told them that Soviet generals were conspiring against Stalin. These sources included both Russian and White Russian émigrés, German double agents (Dr Wittig), German diplomats such as Count Trautmannsdorf, Nazi leaders like Hermann Goering, and the head of the *Gestapo*, Heinrich Müller.

[11] In the National Archives in Washington, D.C., I found a curious *Gestapo* document entitled *Sonderbericht Tuchatschewski* which also throws doubt on the circumstances of his escape from a German prison-of-war camp (Ingolstadt) during World War I. But the author of this long, anonymous report claims that he was helped in his escape by the Freemasons and the Bolsheviks then concentrated in Switzerland. . . . The report submitted shortly before the trial came from an outside consultant. On the cover is the revealing comment: *überholt* ("overtaken by events").

[12] See P. Tastevin, *Rapport: Affaire de Miller: Confidentiel* (unpublished, from the Boris Nikolaevsky collection at the Hoover Institution).

[13] Roman Gul, *Ya unes Rossiyu* (New York, 1984), vol. 2, p. 186. Shortly after publication of the article, Alekseev managed to get himself arrested while trying to steal the blueprint for a submarine on which work had been discontinued. He told his French interrogators that he had reliable information from the Soviet General Staff that Tukhachevsky was a German agent—which probably was the whole purpose of the exercise.

[14] See George Bailey, *The Conspirators* (New York, 1960). I am told that "George Bailey" is the pseudonym of George Vasilchikov. Mr Bailey's book was roughly treated at the time by experts such as Riszard Wraga, who wrote in *Russkaia Mysl* that it could only have been written by an American. No Russian familiar with the events could have produced such a work.

[15] See *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 26 July 1988.

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This culminated in the handing-over of forged documents which implicated Tukhachevsky; they had been prepared by the *Gestapo*, with the help of White Russian émigrés.

The inspiration was apparently Skoblin's; or, to be precise, since Skoblin was not "an ideas man", it must have been inspired by those behind Skoblin. He had met Heydrich in Berlin. We do not know the date of the Heydrich-Skoblin meeting, nor the exact date of the transmission of the incriminating material, but it probably took place some time in February 1937. Beneš hesitated for several weeks but then, between 26 April and 4 May 1937, he had four meetings with the Soviet Ambassador in Prague and together with Krofta, the Foreign Minister, handed over the evidence.[16]

Beneš was no doubt convinced that his decision was the only proper one and that the Soviet leaders would be extremely grateful to him. But he was no Soviet expert, and in no position to judge whether the material that had been handed to him was at all credible. He might, however, have asked himself why the Germans, who were in no way amiably disposed towards Czechoslovakia, should have chosen him as a conduit. His act of monumental stupidity contributed to the extinction of the Czech republic two years later.

EVEN IF Beneš had been utterly convinced of the authenticity of the forgeries—even if he had been able to think of a satisfactory explanation as to why the Nazis were using him as their chosen instrument—it could still be argued that he should not have acted as middleman. For the very survival of Czechoslovakia rested on the existence of the Paris-Prague-Moscow axis, and anything likely to weaken Czechoslovakia's partners was bound to weaken the Czech prospects of survival. This, needless to say, was precisely the result of the Purges of 1937. But Beneš continued to believe for at least another year that he had done a great service to his country and its allies. It seems likely that right up to the unhappy end of his life the full extent of the consequences of his action never dawned on him.

Marshal Tukhachevsky, and Generals Yakir, Kork, Uborevich, and the other Red Army commanders were arrested on various dates during May 1937. In June they were brought to secret trial—although the term "trial" is inappropriate, since the accused were given no opportunity to defend themselves. Altogether, some 40,000 higher Army commanders and commissars were arrested. Most of them were shot, including all ten four-star generals, 48 out of 55 corps commanders (lieutenant-generals), and so on down the ranks. The accusations were irrelevant. Tukhachevsky and most of the others were charged with having plotted with the Germans. But this was not much publicised, for Stalin himself was beginning at that time to explore whether there was common ground for a pact with Hitler. Within two years of the trial, a pact was being signed. It was probably for this reason that no public use was made of the "evidence" received from Paris, Berlin, and Prague, since this could have caused political complications.

IN LATER YEARS, some authors have argued that Stalin did not need elaborate "evidence" from abroad, received in a roundabout, complicated way. Would it not have been sufficient had he claimed that Tukhachevsky and Co. had conspired to kill him, Voroshilov, and other members of the Politburo? Was it not too risky to involve forgeries from foreign sources which could one day be exposed?

Perhaps so, but Stalin was never a straightforward operator, and complicated intrigues seldom deterred him. Why, in the end, he should have made little if any use of the Skoblin-Heydrich-Beneš material remains yet another clouded area. But it was standard procedure (as we now know from the revelations that have occurred under *glasnost*) that Soviet security organs had instructions to collect evidence against virtually everyone in Stalin's entourage. (This, however, did not mean that everyone was purged and shot.)

After Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" it became the practice to accuse Stalin of murdering the flower of the Red Army. At the same time, mitigating circumstances were adduced: Stalin had fallen victim to the forgeries of the Nazi secret service.[17] Even General Dmitri Volkogonov, in one of his many interviews (*Trud*, 19 June 1988), has stated that Stalin was always fascinated by documents, and tended to attribute inordinate importance to anything in handwriting or in print. This may be so but there were many thousands of documents which Stalin ignored—for instance, those telling him of an impending German attack in June 1941. Above all, it has for a long time been known that the first arrests (for instance, of General Putna) took place several months *before* the Skoblin-Heydrich forgeries reached the Kremlin. Furthermore, Tukhachevsky had already been incriminated during the second Moscow show trial of former leading Bolsheviks (G. L. Pyatakov, K. B. Radek, *et al.*), which took place in early 1937.

In brief, the "gullible Stalin" version never stood any real chance of being accepted. Even the editors of the official Soviet history of "the Great Fatherlandic War" could not make up their mind in this respect. The East German edition (1962) claims that Stalin fell victim to a diabolical provocation by the fascist secret service. In the Russian original, however, this passage is missing. . . .

My line of argument has recently been confirmed by General Pavlenko, a leading military historian and former editor of *Military-Historical Archives*. He has stated in an interview[18] that Stalin had begun to undermine Tukhachevsky's position

[16] Beneš's unwitting part in the intrigue is described in considerable detail, on the basis of Czech official files, by Ivan Pfaff, "Prag und der Fall Tuchatschewskij", *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, no. 1 (1987).

[17] A debate has recently sprung up in the Soviet Union as to whether Stalin really believed the forgeries fabricated (or at any rate transmitted) by the Gestapo. Stalin's defenders have found extenuating circumstances; they suggest that he was hoodwinked by German Intelligence (*Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 18 September 1988). But another journal (*Sovetskaya Kultura*, 23 August 1988) has published an interview with General Nikolai Pavlenko, who rejects this version out of hand.

[18] *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 23 August 1988.

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as early as 1930, and that the organs of state security had begun preparations for the trial of the Soviet Generals nine months before the German forgeries reached Moscow. Furthermore, Pavlenko had it on the authority of Major-General Golushkevich (who was present at the 1937 trial) that the Heydrich documents were never once brought up in the course of the proceedings. General Pavlenko believes that Stalin's ill will towards Tukhachevsky, who was too gifted and had become too popular for his taste, was nourished by various denunciations made by Klim Voroshilov—the utterly incompetent People's Commissar of Defence, and an old rival of Tukhachevsky's. Stalin knew what the sensationalist foreign press was writing about Tukhachevsky, whom they had chosen for the role of a "Red Bonaparte". But, Pavlenko continues:

> "Stalin was not so naive as to swallow this very ordinary bait, of the sort that can be found in all elementary textbooks on Intelligence. . . . Stalin would have carried out his sinister design [he managed to kill more senior officers of the Red Army than Hitler] even without the notorious forgery. After all, although there were no more such forgeries after the Tukhachevsky affair, the repressions continued with renewed vigour."

Pavlenko quotes the famous entry from the diary of the Chief of the German General Staff, Franz Halder. It is dated 5 May 1941. "The Russian officer corps makes a very bad impression, much worse than in 1933. They need twenty years to recover their previous level according to the impressions of Krebs [Military Attaché in Moscow in 1941]."

Perhaps it is significant that although Pavlenko quotes Nazi sources about the origins of the forgeries, Skoblin's name is omitted. We do not yet have the details necessary accurately to weigh the possibility that the forgeries may have been commissioned by Stalin; and the relevant Soviet secret service documents—if they still exist—have not been made accessible to General Pavlenko (or any other general).

A GREAT MANY details about the individual fates of the Red Army commanders became known during the first phase of de-Stalinisation after 1956. Even more has emerged over the last eighteen months—what became of their families; how Marshal Blyukher was liquidated after signing the death warrants of his former comrades-in-arms; how General Gamarnik committed suicide, and so on.

What induced Stalin to have certain commanders killed and to spare others, we do not know. The prospects for survival of the more gifted and independent-minded were the worst; but, since a great many mediocrities and toadies were also executed, this does not really clarify the situation. Some of the answers will perhaps come to light; others may remain shrouded in mystery forever because the secret files have been destroyed, or because there were never any documents in the first place. As with Hitler's "Final Solution", orders were apparently often given by word of mouth; the greater the crime, the less likely that any traces would be left.[19]

WAS STALIN not afraid that he might dangerously weaken the Soviet armed forces as the result of killing most of the commanders? Here again, it is unlikely that we shall find answers in the archives. Obviously the issue did not figure very high on Stalin's scale of priorities. He must have thought the outbreak of war quite likely at the time, otherwise he would have ceased to invest so heavily in the defence industry. He probably thought that Marshals, Generals, and Admirals were expendable—mere cogs in a wheel, to use his famous phrase. After all, he never thought very highly of the military profession: if he could be the *Generalissimus* and Marshal Voroshilov could be People's Commissar of Defence, others could command armies and divisions without much preparation.

Did he really believe that military leaders who had never conspired against him and were personally devoted to him constituted a potential danger? That question leads on to the general question of the purpose of the Purges and the Terror—and thus beyond the framework of this article.

QUESTIONS OF MOTIVE will be discussed for a long time to come, but what of the *consequences* of destroying the Red Army Command? What if Stalin had listened to the warnings in spring 1941 . . . what if the Soviet forces at the outbreak of the War had been commanded not by the Voroshilovs and Budjennis, the Kuliks, Shaposhnikovs and Timoshenkos, but by those who had disappeared in the purges?

Recent Soviet writers believe that "Without 1937, there would have been no 1941"[20]—which is to say that the German Army might have advanced to Minsk and Kiev, but not to Stalingrad; that there might have been initial setbacks, but not 20 or 30 or 40 million Soviet victims, no scorched earth, no desperate situations culminating in the siege of Stalingrad, no wasted decades of reconstruction from the rubble after the end of the War. The debate will preoccupy Soviet historians and Soviet public opinion for a long time to come.

But yet another aspect remains to be investigated—namely, the impact of the Red Army purges on decision-making in the Western capitals and in Berlin. The repercussions on German military thinking were substantial. They appeared in Field-Marshal Halder's War Diary, in the estimates of the Eastern Department *(Fremde Heere Ost)* of German Military Intelligence, and above all in the reports of General Ernst Koestring (German Military Attaché in Moscow during the 1930s,

[19] That Stalin had a hand in "the Skoblin provocation" has been suspected in Moscow for a long time. Broad hints to this effect appear, for instance, in an essay on Tukhachevsky by Major-General Isserson, written in the early 1960s but published only in 1988, in the literary journal *Druzhba Narodov*. Isserson was arrested in 1939, but survived the camps. On his release in 1955, he was reinstated in the Army, but demoted to the rank of Colonel. . . .

[20] The expression was coined, I believe, by Konstantin Simonov, who was once a great admirer of Stalin. But it also appears in one form or another in most of the memoirs by Soviet military leaders published after the Twentieth Party Congress.

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and a leading expert on the Red Army). Of these various sources, Koestring had the highest opinion of the fighting capacity of the Red Army. But even he reached the opinion in December 1937 that Stalin had weakened the Army for a long time to come, and that even the most pessimistic observers had not anticipated this. Whereas the Soviet Union had almost become a world power in the middle 1930s, it was now fated to stagnate, even to decline; a war launched by the Soviets had become even less likely.

No wonder Hitler found his prejudices about the Soviet Union confirmed when General Koestring reported to him that the Soviet army was weak; it might be a colossus, but it was a colossus with feet of clay. Attacking the Soviet Union would involve no great risks. True, in the years following, reports were received which stressed that the Red Army was still a serious force as a defensive factor. But other German Intelligence assessments said that reorganisation would take years, perhaps decades. In the meantime, there was no reason to fear the Red Army.

The influence of information about the Purges on Hitler's decision to attack in the East and on the planning of *Barbarossa* (the campaign plan for the invasion of the Soviet Union) also remains to be studied in detail.[21] It was certainly an important contributory factor, but probably not decisive. Hitler was firmly convinced that, because of its inferior racial composition *(Untermenschen)*, the Soviet Union was inherently weak. The armed forces of such a country could not be much stronger than its society at large; a short, sharp blow would be sufficient to bring about its collapse.

Hitler's military leaders (who were less influenced by ideological factors) held an equally low opinion of the USSR, but for different reasons. They believed that Soviet equipment was of inferior quality. They noted the absence of a strong economic and logistic infrastructure, the inability of the leadership to engage in modern warfare, and the poor account the Soviet forces had given of themselves in the Finnish war—everything strengthened them in their belief that the Red Army was not a dangerous antagonist. Furthermore, German intelligence on the Soviet Union was inadequate; the number of Soviet divisions, tanks, and heavy artillery was substantially underrated.

German military success in 1939-41 greatly enhanced the hubris of the German military leaders: to many of them almost anything seemed possible. Had there been no purge in 1937, they might have had greater misgivings about attacking the Soviet Union in June 1941. They would perhaps have tried to concentrate larger forces or keep more substantial forces in reserve; at any rate, they might have modified their plan of attack. Given Hitler's unshakeable resolve, however, they would have launched the attack in any case.

The political consequences were more palpably felt in the Western capitals. France was an ally of the Soviet Union, and the news about the trial of the Generals and the purge of senior officers made a devastating impression, so the French Ambassador, Robert Coulondre, told the Soviet Foreign Minister—as if Maxim Litvinov would disagree with him. According to the French General Staff, Russia had ceased to be a potential ally on whom one could rely. For either the Soviet Generals were guilty of the charges against them, in which case the Soviets could no longer be trusted with any secret; or they were innocent, in which case one had to draw the conclusion that Russia was ruled by madmen.

This opinion was shared not only by those politicians in France who had opposed the alliance with Moscow from the very beginning; it was also accepted by the Centre and the Left. It was the view reported to Washington by Ambassador William Bullitt, and we find reports to this effect in the British and German diplomatic files. The Soviet Union was no longer taken seriously as a military factor; it had become isolated. In Britain, where the General Staff had always had reservations about Soviet fighting power, Neville Chamberlain's doubts about political cooperation with the Soviet Union were strengthened. In short, the Soviet crisis played a considerable role in the Appeasement policy and British foot-dragging when at last military talks with Moscow began in the summer of 1939.

WAS THE GAME worth the candle? Soviet historians have always unequivocally put the blame for the breakdown in the 1939 talks on the Western powers. In 1988, however, they began to concede that it was a mistake to explain British and French appeasement, and the doubts of those countries about the reliability of the Soviet Union as an ally, as due solely to innate Western anti-Communism. Given the situation created by the Purges, perhaps it was only natural that enthusiasm to establish a common front with Moscow should have waned in the Western capitals. . . .

It would be wrong to explain Western policy towards Nazi Germany in 1937-39 only with reference to the weakened international position of the Soviet Union. At that time there were in London and Paris not a few who preferred Hitler to Stalin, or at least thought the former more amenable to reason. But the impact of the Purges on European politicians, military leaders, and public opinion was truly enormous—and the same is true with regard to the United States.[22] Just

[21] For brief general accounts, see Andreas Hillgruber in the *Festschrift* for Fritz Epstein and Erhard Moritz, "Die Einschätzung der Roten Armee durch den faschistischen deutschen Generalstab von 1935 bis 1941" in the East German *Zeitschrift für Militärgeschichte* (no. 2, 1969). The impressive multi-volume history *Das deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (1979-) comments on this issue only in passing.

[22] Recently, there has been an inclination among neo-Stalinist Soviet writers to stress the "global" character of Stalinism, which, in their view, was not a specific Soviet (let alone Russian) phenomenon, but a mood shared by many Westerners "from Madrid to Shanghai". Stalin certainly had his supporters in the West, but this is not sufficient as a historical alibi. In the case of the purged Generals there was unanimity outside the Soviet Union. Loy Henderson, US Deputy Chief of Mission, cabled from Moscow on 23 June 1937:

> "Insofar as the Embassy can ascertain, not one diplomatic mission here, not a single foreign observer in Moscow whose opinion bears weight, believes that the executed Red Army officers were guilty of the crimes attributed to them. . . ."

But many Soviet citizens believed they were guilty, or pretended to do so.

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how decisive it was remains to be studied in detail. Once this has been established it will be possible to talk with greater certainty about the prospects of stopping Nazi aggression in 1938-39, or of defeating Hitler in a much shorter time and with many fewer victims.

In short, the decapitation of the Red Army must be studied not only in the framework of Soviet domestic history, but as an international event which contributed to world history taking a different turning. In that extraordinary story, General Nikolai Skoblin played a minor—and ignominious—part.

SINCE THESE LINES were written, further revelations have been made in Moscow. According to the last instalment of the semi-official Stalin biography by General Dmitri Volkogonov (*Oktyabr*, December 1988), Stalin received the first information on the Tukhachevsky plot from Nikolai Yezhov, then head of the secret services. This material came from *ROVS*, the Russian émigré military association, of which Skoblin was one of the leaders and which had been penetrated by the Soviets. Stalin passed it on to two of his closest companions "for information only". Their comments have not been preserved, but Volkogonov believes that Stalin was not impressed. He does not discuss the possibility that this material had been planted in Paris by Yezhov's agents on Stalin's orders. This is surprising, since Volkogonov is sometimes willing to entertain even the wildest theories; that Stalin engaged in mass murder only after Trotsky boasted that he still had much support inside the Soviet Union; that Bukharin and his supporters were executed because the organ of the exiled Mensheviks (the *Sotsialisticheski Vestnik* in Paris) had mentioned the possibility seven years earlier. . . .

WILL WE EVER know the full truth? Soviet historians complain that, even under *glasnost*, the documentary evidence does not exist for the final assessment of cases such as the murder of Kirov and Trotsky—see Professor Vasetski, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 4 January 1989. Vasetski continues: "It is dificult to say whether it existed in the first place."

Historians know from experience with another totalitarian régime that orders for murder were frequently given orally, although in some cases the evidence eventually turned up in unlikely places.[23] Furthermore, procedures in the Soviet Union were usually more bureaucratic than in Germany—where there was frequently a pretence of due legal process. The relevant authorities may be unwilling to make all the evidence available at present. But this does not in the least mean that it was all destroyed—or that it never existed in the first place.

[23] On 6 January 1989 *Izvestia* carried an announcement according to which the Soviet Foreign Ministry files concerning the Tukhachevsky affair have been declassified. F. Kovalev, the director of the archives, said in an interview that while there was no doubt that Beneš had indeed received the disinformation package from Berlin there was no evidence that it had ever reached Stalin. On the other hand the French authorities had received the same information from Russian émigré circles—again according to evidence from the Soviet Embassy in Paris. Kovalev concluded that historians and archivists still have much work to do to establish without any shadow of doubt how Stalin received the incriminating material. . . .

My essay is a modest contribution to this end. But I suspect that from now on historians will have to look for evidence in archives others than those belonging to the Soviet Foreign Ministry. And it is unfortunately not at all clear whether these will soon be accessible.

Loving Janus

His breath might fill
the house, if I let it. Already
it's wormed the floorboards up
to my unsubtle attic bed, its suck
like some unlikely halo in the dark. My blanket's
insubstantial to the rasp.

Or: he might, himself, ascend, to touch
with one finger the jut
of my hip and wish me luck
with the rest of my life. In loving

Janus I have come to tolerate
such things as these and every bit
expect, by morning, to have found
him in his normal place, his breath in state
around him: sitting
the doorway, surveying
my perpetual goings and comings

Jean Hanff Korelitz

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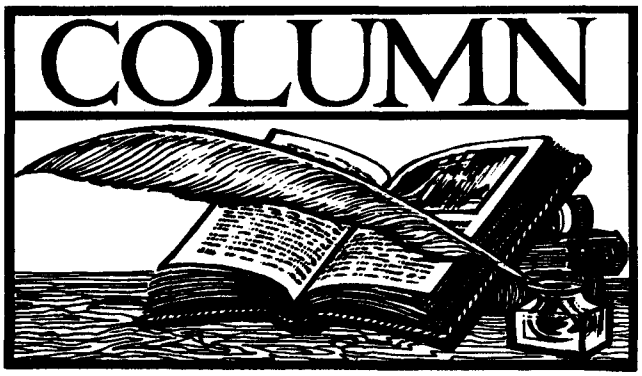

A FRENCH FRIEND used to complain that Britain's serious newspapers published too few *faits divers*. "How can you get to know a country", she asked, "if all you read is politics and economics?"

She had a point. Today, of course, several once serious papers carry more than their share of "human interest", while the tabloids print little else. But many of the "diverse facts" that are most revealing crop up in the margins of other stories, and seem not to get investigated on their own. Reporters, like the over-informed experts who write most users' manuals, tend to forget how little the rest of us know.

Take the Lockerbie tragedy. What gradually emerged from that grisly event was the random nature of airport security. Semtex explosive, we learned, could be squeezed into harmless-looking shapes to deceive the scanner; and devices which their inventors claim could sniff it out are too costly to be used. Hold baggage, it seems, is not invariably X-rayed: it would be too expensive to man all the necessary machines. Brisk assurance, too, can carry a good bluffer past security checks, especially with a plastic ID card. And are baggage handlers subject to positive vetting? No reporter that I read in the first week of the story seemed to have asked.

Take education and local government. In recent months, scads of stories have opened doors on strange doings—then let them swing shut. In one area, parents were told that their children must go to a school with large numbers of Muslims, because a nearby Christian school was overfull. The parents protested, on what they said were cultural grounds; not surprisingly, they were accused of racism. Only after they had organised pirate lessons in a public house was the argument settled. It turned out, first, that many Muslims shared the parents' desire to preserve their own culture; and, secondly, that the "overfull" school had plenty of room. Administrative error was the official culprit, or scapegoat: but many readers would have liked to know just what the local bureaucrats thought they were doing, whether they now face penalties and, if so, what. Equally mysterious is a recent dispute in a London borough, where one school has lost a succession of head teachers, and now a small caucus of staff members is being transferred elsewhere. Without further details, imagination runs riot. So it does in the case of a woman physician, guilty it would seem of no clinical misconduct, but suspended because male colleagues darkly allege God knows what. Sure: some people are pills, and it's hard to document cantankerousness. But without better reporting, readers can only speculate—and implicitly smear.

The story that really prompted these reflections was what Erle Stanley Gardner might have called *The Case of the Curried Egg*. Need I recall it? Until recently, Mrs Edwina Currie was a junior Health Minister noted for tart remarks about how Northerners eat stodge, the old should wrap up well in winter, and girls shouldn't, as she put it, "screw around". Now Mrs Currie is no longer at Health—although she remains in public favour. Her misdeed was to tell a TV reporter that most of Britain's egg production was prone to salmonella infection.

A strip-tease at the Palace of Westminster could hardly have produced more ructions. Eggs, we were told, must be eaten hard-boiled—and boiled for seven minutes. No more scrambled eggs, home-made mayonnaise, or fried eggs sunny side up. From now on, there would be nothing like leather, except safe eggs. Even vegetarians were at risk, unless they turned vegan. Christmas-cake icing, if made from raw egg-white, could kill old people and babies. Go to work on an egg? Only if it was solid as a baseball. Otherwise, go to the wall.

Understandably, consumers panicked. Egg sales dropped; but the birds went on laying. Poultry farmers grew desperate, and appealed to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food. In the end, the Government put up a rescue package of taxpayers' money to compensate the farmers—and shortly afterwards Mrs Currie felt obliged to resign.

SO MUCH for the story. Much more interesting were the "diverse facts". First, when the Ministry of Agriculture tried to reassure the public, it declared that most British eggs were uncontaminated. This was true: but it was no rebuttal of what Mrs Currie had said. She had accused British egg *production*; and while experts bandied figures about in every direction, it did emerge as likely that much of egg production was open to risk.

Secondly, the experts revealed that poultry feed was not just grain, or bran, or even kitchen scraps. It could include bits and pieces of dead birds: so some hens were cannibals, eating even other birds' feathers. Suitably processed, no doubt; but hardly appetising as a contribution to the traditional British breakfast.

Thirdly, when the panic began, television cameras invaded the farm. Live hens, squirming in a brown heap, were shown being stuffed into cardboard boxes like unruly underwear into a trunk, to be taken away and killed. There was a shortage of gas for the slaughtering, so a new source was found in Germany. But gassing cost money. Some farmers simply wrung the hens' necks.

It must have taken them some time. Other pictures showed what many viewers can never have seen—the reality of battery farming. Even in concentration camps, some of the inmates could walk around. Not so the hens, hunched in cages, row upon row of them, pecking feed from a sort of manger channel, excreting on the spot, and laying eggs as regularly as club comedians.

"They like it"—"They're better fed than if they scratched in the farmyard"—"This way, they peck no dirt"—"They're better layers". . . . Some of the excuses may be valid: but no one would use them if the subjects were people. And in the

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wake of the egg scare, other experts have revealed more: for instance, that some battery hens' bones become as fragile as potato crisps. Would anyone treat a pet animal that way? Ah, but these are not really animals. They're what I've heard agronomists refer to as "processed grain". And beaks and feathers, to be punctilious about it.

The other argument beloved of battery farmers is that the public needs or demands cheap and plentiful food. True, a balance must be struck between appetite and squeamishness. Vegans at one extreme, carnivores at the other, disagree fundamentally; vegetarians and fish-eaters come somewhere in the middle. Everyone must choose his own point on the spectrum: but there has been a shift, recently, in the herbivore direction. Partly for supposed health reasons; partly to save money; partly out of compassion. And the sudden collapse of the egg market, only slowly recovering, shows how volatile consumers can be if—for good or bad reasons—they suddenly shy off a particular food. My belief is that the fall-out of the *Curried Egg* episode will include a bigger market for "free-range" eggs. Not because they are safer than battery eggs, on which point experts differ, but because more people now know how battery hens are kept. The next step will be to reveal what "free-range" really means. When that's widely appreciated, many people will surely demand something more.

What townspeople carry in their heads, after all, is a distant memory of life on the farm. It may have been formed from picture-books in childhood. Sweet eye-lashed cows simper over post-and-rail fencing; a stolid Dobbin of a carthorse swishes his tail. Hens cluck and squawk; a rooster crows; a plump, tame pig grunts and snuffles in his pen. Ducks sail the pond; the farmyard cat sleeps in the sun; a trusty dog lollops alongside the farmer, ruddy-cheeked and honest-eyed. Stooks and haycocks dot the fields. Birds sing from the hedges. There's a faint sweet smell of cowpats and wild flowers.

Welcome to the theme park—because that's all it is. Many typical modern farms have corrugated iron in place of thatch, prairies in place of hedges, cattle-sheds in place of pasture, silage in place of hay. Few birds sing in the rape fields. The pigs and hens are in prison, "processed grain". And the farmer? A committee in London—the board of some food-processing firm. The top man may be an accountant. This is agribusiness, not Farmer Giles.

To be fair, the agri-businessmen may be civilised, believers in conservation and animal welfare. As city-dwellers, they too like the countryside, and probably have cottages or estates. But it's their collective behaviour that matters. And, however well they manage their rural assets, and however many smaller farmers may still survive, the big firms set the pace and the prices. To keep up, the small man has to compete with the same—or worse—cost-cutting methods. Unable to afford manpower or to supply accommodation, he resorts to machinery, concrete, and nitrates. His wife may take in boarders; but he can hardly afford *not* to factory-farm.

I regret this, personally, for two reasons. The first is the way that Britain's countryside is being despoiled. Even "set-aside"—paying public subsidies to take surplus land out of production—seems likely to produce either scrub or picnic areas. Banning or restricting chemicals and imposing firmer planning rules would be a better policy. Even then it would take years, if not centuries, to restore copses and hedges, hastily grubbed up at the time when prairies were all the rage.

My second regret is more trivial. Like many British people, I come of farming stock. It used to be almost a boast that my great-grandfather farmed near Tiverton. Now, it feels more like the old music-hall joke: "My family was in the iron and steel business—my mother did the ironing and my father did the stealing." As if in some movie, the public image of the farmer has dissolved from a jovial hayseed to a grasping lobbyist, with the Ministry of Agriculture jumping to attention at every threat to the rural vote. That too, obviously, is a caricature: but it's been reinforced by *The Case of the Curried Egg*.

STILL, stereotypes linger. One of their great repositories is the BBC's radio soap opera, *The Archers*, billed as "an everyday story of country folk". The goings-on at Ambridge, its fictional village setting, are frankly rather narky. People whinge, and worry, and gossip, and "have words". It should cure any townie of wanting to live in the country. But its real secret lies in the voices of the cast.

Produced in Birmingham, *The Archers* involves the odd near-Brummagem, West Midlands accent; but to a metropolitan ear most of its characters sound as if they come from Gloucestershire—the nearest thing to the "Loamshire" of

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so many plays and novels, and much more "Mummerset" than its neighbour Somerset. In Ambridge, "I" becomes "Oi", "what" becomes "waat", and "about" becomes something like "abeout". Most competent actors can do it in their sleep.

This vaguely West Country burr may well be ancient. I remember a performance of Shakespeare in what were hoped to be the original accents: it sounded like a blend of Irish, Welsh, and Devonian. Long after Shakespeare's time, such rustic sounds began to be despised; but more recently, as Professor John Honey has pointed out in a fascinating study of accents,[1] they have come back into favour.

> "We still need to explore the reasons why rustic accents, by contrast with [those associated with the uneducated citizens of grimy industrial conurbations]—and by a reversal of the centuries-old disparagement of the countryman's speech—are so much more highly rated, so that the West Country accent may be the most significant asset of a politician, the Hampshire accent may be the essential ingredient in the public career of a famous cricket commentator, and the Chilterns accent, which the actor Bernard Miles frequently exploited, may have helped him on his way to a peerage."

Professor Honey offers three provisional explanations. First, before 1870 the gentry shared the rustic twang; secondly, the rural poor were deferential, and not threatening like the urban mob; and thirdly, the countryside became idealised as industrial cities spread. Myself, I see the third reason as the strongest.

Whatever the key to British attitudes, Professor Honey reveals that accent can still arouse passion, confirm prejudice, and blight careers. The accent most favoured, it seems is "unmarked RP" (Received Pronunciation)—roughly the standard southern English of BBC newsreaders. "RP" speakers are even thought to be tall and clean. "Marked RP", as used by the Prince of Wales ("abite the nice"), is well accepted in his case, but risks putting some people *orf*. The most unfavourite accents include Glaswegian and Birmingham (despite its influence on *The Archers*). A Southern Irish accent, if not too marked, is popular; so is a gentle Scots. Northern Irish accents, especially when marked, seem equivocal in their effects. When I first heard them, in the Army, they sounded charming; but Ian Paisley, partly on account of his accent, has apparently been described as a "hate-filled rabble-rouser", while some people poke fun at the BBC's political correspondent John Cole, and I personally either smile or sigh when I hear its weather forecasters from Ulster eternally predicting "reehan".

The question posed in the title of Professor Honey's book is perfectly serious. Snobbish, unhistorical, ill-informed, and bigoted as it may seem, concern with accent goes deep in British life. In our more egalitarian times, some Old Etonians I know try to adopt a blurred, "comprehensive school" way of speaking. Even Prince Edward uses the glottal stop. And in many State schools, which at one time might have scolded their pupils for "dropped aitches", Cockney vowel-sounds, the Northern "u" ("but" pronounced to rhyme with "put", and sometimes vice versa), and other class shibboleths, teachers now seem very reluctant even to suggest that inability to speak RP may be a handicap in later life.

To Professor Honey, and to me, this suggests that they are confusing their political wishes with their educational duties. No one can be pleased that, 77 years since Bernard Shaw wrote *Pygmalion*, it remains "impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making another Englishman hate or despise him". British society would certainly be healthier if accents were regarded as regional folklore rather than badges of class. But life is still not like that; and education should equip everyone to handle his own language well. If this includes the ability to "talk proper" when necessary, so be it. Children are brilliant mimics; and it's painful to hear the sons and daughters of "new Commonwealth" immigrants learning speech habits which, in many cases, will consign them to the bottom of the heap. But that, of course, is one of those "diverse facts" which journalists ought to investigate, and all too seldom do.

M

[1] *Does Accent Matter? The Pygmalion Factor*. By JOHN HONEY. Faber, £4.95.

Salvator Rosa (1615-73)

Strong sun on the Tuscan
town where he painted
did not flush the sombre

face of his revolutionist
(that head meant for axing)
propped on the easel, rough

hands unrolling a banner
with—goose-quilled in
haste—"Silence, unless

what you have to say is
better than silence." As
sunlight flowered low hills,

while inquisitors ranted,
rebellion was whispered in
shade, Rosa worked on, deepening

the eyes of his saints, risking
slogans on canvas. And
that was better than silence.

Lucien Stryk

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George Szirtes

Rooms

The coolest room in the city

This is the coolest room in the city,
three windows see to that, and leaves
like dark stains
lend a kind opacity
through which the whole room breathes,
and later when it rains

the windows answer anxiously,
knock for knock, and let the damp
cloud up the panes;
a cataract through which we see
reflections of a lamp
lit only when it rains.

Rooms are at their friendliest
when keeping something out. To sleep
is best. Bright chains
of water dangling at the breast
preserve their calm and keep
silence when it rains.

Recording

A distant night train and a dog. Then crickets.
And fingers turning the leaves of a book.
Insects hover at the window. The hedges lean back.
Their curving arms are paths of rockets.

The final sensations are necessarily fragmentary,
like voices on a tape recorder repeating . . .
and there's the horror. Somebody goes on quoting
fragments, unattributable, without memory.

The comfort of rooms

The comfort of rooms is that they live within
and yet without the history of those
who walk across their carpets, wear new clothes
and shed their hair, bacteria and skin,
whose human walls are terrifying, thin
and useless as the petals of a rose.

An old man crawls down a short flight of stairs:
he's drying out, each time he smiles the cracks
across his face widen and come unstuck,
the paint flakes off his eyes, a muscle tears,
his marrow rattles in his bones, the layers
of vision shift in alarming parallax.

This is the parallax the windows learn
between their doubled panes. Their wings are tense,
prepared for flight, to carry the immense
hopes of the house beyond the known pattern
of its creatures. Look how the flowers burn
in the hot vase, desiring innocence.

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Imre

The old blind woman's room again, but someone's missing.
I know! It's her brother, the gentle-faced,
smiling through his haze of water. He is kissing
a little boy who winces at the unfamiliar taste
of death but remains polite—
at least he remembers to say good night.

And now she's alone it is as if he never did rise
from the chair in the dark corner. It is as if
his silent laughter, somewhere between nonsense and surprise
at someone so much younger pressing at his teeth,
or what remains of them, should hold
the child inside its terminal cold.

But where he was, he isn't. Wasn't the room his
as well as hers? The blinds were down that day
because of the heat—now hers alone. The summer is
a form of property, its killing heat. But anyway
something of his remains in the air.
Or whose is that small shadow? The chair?

John Gohorry

The Therapists

In the last century they might have been novelists
—the fortnightly serial culminating in a three-decker
worked over, against the clock, on long afternoons—
or perhaps mere hack bodgers of prose by the quire,
filching obscure paragraphs from the *Gentleman's Magazine*
or the *Lady's Portmanteau*, turning a hard coin
at the quill's end. Either way, these compiled

their serious, sustained fictions, the bay window
giving on to the Park Pastures, or Grub Street tumbling
through its ant-heap errands always pulling the eye
away from the smudged page, inviting corrections
or, even, a short walk. But the therapists spin
their endless, plausible fictions in a great cavern
of mirrors; and should we, their invention,

after our regular group want to make body-trespass,
we find their contrived landscapes too formal to be
either authentic, or comfortable in—these pillows
are mere catalysts for aggression. Being fabulous
in this setting, we are subject only to such
revisions as will sustain it—vainly dream of
the street, the park spaces where we were once real.

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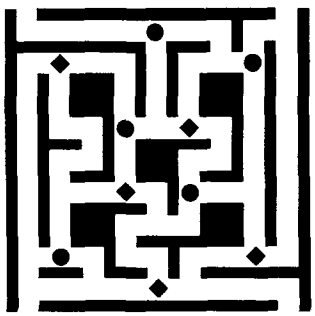
Symbols in Myths & Dreams

Freud v. Lévi-Strauss—By ADAM KUPER



STRUCTURALISM and psychoanalysis offer quite distinct modes of interpretation, yet they have accepted, even sought, a more or less uneasy coexistence. This has been particularly evident in France; most notably perhaps in the work of Jacques Lacan, who claimed to have achieved a synthesis between the ideas of Freud and of Lévi-Strauss.

Lévi-Strauss himself has usually been respectful, though sceptical, in his references to the Freudian tradition. In his autobiographical memoir, *Tristes Tropiques*, he names the three great intellectual influences during his formative student years as Freud, Marx and geology. (All three, he suggests, are united in their insistence that surface appearances are a poor guide to underlying realities.[1]) Yet it is evident that Lévi-Strauss has developed a theory of myth and of symbolism in myth which is very different from Freud's. Indeed, it has come to constitute the main challenge to the entrenched Freudian and Jungian traditions in this field, and in his most recent book, *La potière jalouse* (published in France in 1985), Lévi-Strauss at last confronts the Freudian alternative to his own approach.[2]

It is common ground between Freud and Lévi-Strauss that dreams and myths should yield to the same form of analysis, although in practice Freud was particularly concerned with dreams, as Lévi-Strauss is with myth. In the context of a comparison of their approaches there is, perhaps, a special interest in an otherwise little-known work of Freud's, *Dreams in Folklore*, which was written in 1911 but not published until 1958.[3]

Freud's essay dealt with German folk-tales which incorporate dreams. He was particularly intrigued by the fact that these stories not only retail dreams, but also offer an interpretation of them. To be sure, the folk-tales are quite lighthearted. They offer interpretations of dreams in order to make fun of girlish innocence, peasant greed, and so forth. Yet although he fully appreciated—even enjoyed—their lack of seriousness, Freud came to the remarkable conclusion that "folklore interprets dream symbols in the same way as psychoanalysis. . . ." At one point he goes even further, suggesting that:

> It is very much more convenient to study dream symbolism in folklore than in actual dreams. Dreams are obliged to conceal things and only surrender their secrets to interpretation; these comic anecdotes, however, which are disguised as dreams, are intended as communications, meant to give pleasure to the person who tells them as well as to the listener, and therefore the interpretation is added quite unashamedly to the symbol. These stories delight in stripping off the veiling symbols.[4]

The main body of folk-tales which Freud and D. E. Oppenheim considered, exploit the symbolic association of gold and faeces. For example:

> "My neighbour once dreamt that the Devil had led him to a field to dig for gold; but he found none. Then the Devil said: 'It is there for sure, only you cannot dig it up now; but take note of the place so that you may recognise it again by yourself.'
>
> When the man asked that the place should be made recognisable by some sign, the Devil suggested: 'Just shit on it, then it will not occur to anybody that there is gold lying hidden here and you will be able to recognise the exact place.' The man did so and then immediately awoke and felt that he had done a great heap in his bed."

It is, of course, a familiar psychoanalytical thesis that there is a deep association between faeces and treasure, particularly gold. As Freud explained it, "All the interest which the child has had in faeces is transferred in the adult on to another material which he learns in life to set above almost everything

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[1] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Jonathan Cape, 1973), ch. 6, "The making of an anthropologist".

[2] *La potière jalouse*. By CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS. Translated into English as *The Jealous Potter* by BENEDICTE CHORIER. University of Chicago Press, $22.95, £15.95.

[3] The essay was written in collaboration with D. E. Oppenheim, a classicist who was briefly associated with the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society. It disappeared from view for a generation before turning up in the possession of Oppenheim's daughter. The work was published in German with an English translation by the International Universities Press (New York, 1958).

[4] Sigmund Freud, *Dreams in Folklore* (1958), pp. 63, 26-7.

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else--gold." The folk-tale makes the association explicit, just as an analyst might do in interpreting a patient's dream. "In dreams in folklore", Freud concluded, "gold is seen in the most unambiguous way to be a symbol of faeces. If the sleeper feels a need to defecate, he dreams of gold, of treasure."[5]

In short, Freud was enchanted to find unexpected support for his theory of dream symbolism in the ancient peasant wisdom of Central Europe.

In his essay he took it for granted that symbols in dreams—and in folk-tales—commonly have a clear and fixed referent. Moreover, this referent is normally part of the body—particularly a sexual organ—or a physiological function. In fact, Freud did not always stick to this point of view, as we shall see; but it is the particular target of Lévi-Strauss in *The Jealous Potter*.

Lévi-Strauss suggests that Freud oscillated throughout his career between a realist and a relativist conception of symbolism. When operating as a realist he assumes that each symbol should have a set meaning, and that one might be able to compile something like a dictionary of symbolism. When operating as a relativist, however, Freud emphasises that symbols can have different meanings in different contexts, and that a particular use of a symbol can be interpreted only by a process of free association which takes into account the personal history and culture of an individual.

Freud the relativist wins the approval of Lévi-Strauss—indeed, Lévi-Strauss goes so far as to say that when operating as a relativist Freud is attempting "to understand an individual in the way an ethnographer seeks to understand a society."[6] There can be no higher praise. Freud the realist, however, is committing the ultimate solecism: he assumes that symbolic meanings are independent of context.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) Freud suggests striking a balance between the realist and relativist positions. "We are thus obliged", he wrote, "in dealing with these elements of the dream-content which must be recognized as symbolic, to adopt a combined technique, which on the one hand rests on the dreams' associations and on the other hand fills the gaps from the interpreter's knowledge of symbols." He does offer a check-list of fixed definitions—the King and Queen represent parents, the Prince or Princess the dreamer, and so on; and, of course, he has lists of common symbols of the genitals—hats, weapons, stairs, shafts, and so forth. And yet he admits that symbols may have several meanings, and even suggests at one point that "as with Chinese script, the correct interpretation can only be arrived at on each occasion from the context". But it is difficult to strike a balance in practice, and Freud generally opts for the realist alternative, putting aside, as he says, these "qualifications and reservations".[7]

The radically realist position is superficially attractive because it promises—like Mr Casaubon in *Middlemarch*—a Key to all Mythologies. Unfortunately, it can get one into all sorts of difficulties. Indeed, only a few pages after his confident statement that "In dreams in folklore gold is seen in the most unambiguous way to be a symbol of faeces", Freud introduces a set of tales in which a peasant dreams that he is climbing up to heaven, or down to earth from heaven. He constructs a rope or thread from various materials which come to hand, but it is just too short. The angels suggest that he defecate and lengthen the rope with turds. He wakes up and finds he has defecated on his wife.

Here, apparently, faeces are not associated with treasure at all. Freud comments, moreover, that in this folk-tale "we encounter spun thread as a new symbol for evacuated faeces, although psychoanalysis furnishes us with no counterpart to this symbolization but on the contrary attributes another symbolic meaning to thread." In the Freudian lexicon, thread is a symbol of semen.

Clearly, there is a problem here. If gold always stands for faeces, and thread always stands for semen, then a thread of faeces is not easy to interpret. To be sure, just because gold stands for faeces, it does not follow that faeces must stand for gold and that it could not, for example, stand for semen; but it must be admitted that the conventional Freudian lexicon does not offer these associations.

In interpreting this dream, however, Freud abandons the lexicon and suggests that the peasant is sexually rejecting his wife and insulting her. He concludes that: "his wife, who lies by him, does not attract him; he exerts himself in vain to get an erection for her. . . . But the disappointed sexual libido finds release along the path of regression in the excremental wishful impulse, which abuses and soils the unserviceable sexual object."[8] In short, the thread stands for semen, but the faeces stand for—excrement. How does one know what is and what is not a symbol? Evidently, a bodily function will always stand for itself. This essentialist view of symbolism is anathema to Lévi-Strauss.

Lévi-Strauss not only rejects conventional interpretations of symbolism. He will have nothing to do with traditional procedures for the analysis of myths. Orthodox studies of myths begin by trying to establish the pure, canonical version of a myth from the variety of extant versions. They then attempt to develop a reading of the myth which explicates the symbols, characters and situations which the myth employs. Lévi-Strauss, however, denies that any one version of a myth has special authority. He believes that (in the absence of a written text) myths are constantly in flux. Quite commonly a myth will change with each telling. And it is precisely these variations—or, more formally, transformations—which permit the analyst to come to grips with a mythology.

Lévi-Strauss also insists that the individual elements of a myth are arbitrary. They have no meaning in themselves and no fixed symbolic references. Their significance can be gleaned only from a quite elaborate process of contextualisation. This implies that the elements of a myth must first be

[5] *Dreams in Folklore*, pp. 38, 37.
[6] *The Jealous Potter*, pp. 188-9.
[7] *The Interpretation of Dreams*, pp. 388, 289. For the lists of symbols see section E of chapter 6.
[8] *Dreams in Folklore*, pp. 45, 49-50.

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analysed in relation to each other, not taken out of context and related directly to some point of reference in the outside world.

In *The Jealous Potter*, Lévi-Strauss takes as his point of departure the myths of the Jivaro Indians of the western foothills of the Andes in Peru and Ecuador. One of their favourite mythical characters is a bird, the nightjar or "goatsucker" (the name favoured by the translator, who tells us that the bird belongs to the same family as the nighthawk and whippoorwill). The goatsucker figures prominently in the mythology of many South American Indian peoples. Rather as Punch is famous for his large nose (in the childrens' version at any rate), so the goatsucker is notable for its huge beak and for its jealousy. These are both aspects of its greed, its oral incontinence. Indeed, it is supposed to eat much more than it can digest, and is much given to belching and breaking wind. Its contrary in South American mythology is the sloth, which is represented as eating hardly anything at all, and very rarely defecating.

The goatsucker is contrasted with the sloth in several ways. It flies, eats hugely and is chronically troubled with intestinal gas; and it is associated with the creation of pottery clay, creepers and gourds. In stark contrast to the goatsucker, the sloth eats little, seldom excretes, and then only on the ground; and it is associated with the creation of grain and with the invention of weaving which is, with pottery, the main Jivaro craft.[9]

THE TWO CHARACTERS are clearly conceived of as polar opposites, or at least as two extremes within a triangle. There is obviously also room for a creature which both eats and defecates excessively, a role played in much of South American mythology by the howler monkey, which eats all the time and constantly and shamelessly defecates and urinates from the trees. While the goatsucker flies and the sloth descends to the ground to defecate, the howler monkey does its business in the trees. And while the sloth hangs on to a tree trunk with his forepaws, the howler monkey often hangs upside down—because, the Indians explain, he suffers from chronic diarrhoea. In some areas—for instance, where one of these animals is unknown—other creatures are pressed into one or other role. The ant-bear, for example, often takes the place of the sloth as a creature which eats only small insects and defecates seldom, if at all. Sometimes purely imaginary animals are introduced into this set, for instance animals which have no anus and must eat and defecate through the mouth.

It would therefore be quite mistaken to imagine that the Indians observe, say, the sloth, agree upon its characteristic traits and then weave stories around it. They certainly know a great deal about the creatures of the forest, but once these creatures are introduced into a myth they become mythical creatures. For the moment, their critical attributes are defined in opposition to those of other mythical creatures. They come to embody particular values within a structure of oppositions which is established by the myth.

In the myths, the goatsucker, the sloth and the howler-monkey are defined most starkly in terms of simple oral and anal characteristics. They are orally or anally incontinent or grotesquely retentive. They are also contrasted along other dimensions. There is an opposition between ground-based, flying, and arboreal creatures; and in some myths between silent and noisy creatures; and so on.

These dimensions of contrast have to do with what Lévi-Strauss calls mythical codes. If a myth draws images and incidents from geography, then it is operating a geographical code. It may also operate a cosmological code, a physiological code, a colour code, a botanical code, or whatever. Each code creates a set of oppositions and embodies the polar values in specific characters and objects.

All myths employ several codes at once, and it is an egregious error to assume that one has priority. There is no privileged set of images which will unlock all the other codes in a myth. No myth can be "solved" by translating it into a master code which controls all the others. One of Lévi-Strauss's recurrent criticisms of Freud is that he gives priority to the "physiological code", which becomes the ultimate point of reference for all the other codes in a myth or a dream. Treasure stands for faeces—but faeces stands for itself.

The cardinal rule, then, is that the elements of a myth take their meaning from their place in a code, which defines specific oppositions and relationships. But these codes in mythology are not like security codes which take a vital message and disguise it in order to smuggle it past the enemy, as Freud imagined. No code simply translates a sober, direct message into another, secret language. Rather, each code has its own preoccupations and images, and combines with others—like instruments in an orchestra—to yield the myth. Consequently the codes must be interpreted with reference to other codes. An entire myth is, moreover, just one of a sequence of myths, and each myth takes its meaning at least in part from its relationship to other myths. The relationship between one myth and another is typically one of "transformation".

By a transformation Lévi-Strauss means a formal change in the organisation of an argument or of a story, which affects every element and every relationship in a consequential manner. If a story-teller were to take a well-known tale (say Red Riding-Hood) and simply alter a few details, or even tack on a new conclusion (the little girl's discovery of a treasure during her escape, for instance), this would not amount to a transformation. But if the little girl were to be accompanied by a brother, then a fundamental change would have been introduced which a structuralist would expect to be matched by other changes—even, perhaps, a complete reversal of the outcome.[10]

THERE HAVE been a number of attempts to formulate transformation rules. One procedure that is frequently applied by story-tellers transforms a story simply by changing one character and inverting the outcome of an incident. A good example can be found in the story which Freud and Oppenheim discuss, in which the peasant

[9] See *The Jealous Potter*, pp. 93-96.

[10] Cf. the discussion in Jarich Oosten, *The War of the Gods: The Social Code in Indo-European Mythology* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 4.

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dreams that he defecates on some treasure in order to hide it, and awakes to find that he has soiled his conjugal bed. Freud adds that the dream has a conclusion: "As he was fleeing from the house, he put on a cap in which a cat had done its business during the same night. . . ."[11] This is a straightforward inversion of the main story (especially if the cat and the wife are substitutable for each other, and there are various indications that this may be the case in European folk culture).

TRANSFORMATIONS in mythology are commonly more elaborate. *The Jealous Potter* begins, for example, with a myth of the Jivaro. The sun and moon were formerly human beings and lived on earth. They shared a home and a wife, who was named goatsucker, like the bird. She welcomed the warm embrace of the sun, but recoiled from the cold body of the moon. Moon became angry and climbed up a creeper into the sky. He also blew out the sun's fire. Both her husbands having disappeared, goatsucker felt herself abandoned. She tried to follow the moon into the sky, carrying a basket filled with the special clay which women use to do pottery. Moon, however, cut the creeper which united the two worlds, and the woman fell to earth with her basket. The clay scattered over the earth and can now be gathered here and there. The woman changed into a bird and at the time of the new moon she cries plaintively to the husband who deserted her.

Later, the sun climbed up to the sky on another creeper, but the moon continues to pursue him and they are therefore never seen together.

The Finnish ethnographer R. Karsten, who recorded this tale, collected other versions of the story. In one, goatsucker is married to the moon alone, and when she is rejected by her husband and falls to earth it is with a basket of gourds. The seeds of the gourd which are scattered by her fall, provide the main plants cultivated by the Indians today.

Neighbours of the Jivaro provide further variants. In one tribe, instead of a woman with two husbands there is a story about moon who has two wives. One day he sends the first wife to collect ripe gourds for him. She makes a soup and drinks it herself, and brings back just three green gourds for moon. Furious, he climbs into the sky on a cord. The woman follows, he cuts the cord, and she falls and is crushed into pottery clay. In another version, the terrified wife defecates clay.

Another Jivaro myth represents the goatsucker as a male, wooing the female moon. The moon is also being courted by the sun. Fed up with both suitors, she escapes into the sky. The goatsucker tries to follow her, but the moon cuts the creeper up which he is climbing and it falls to the ground and becomes the creeper of the forest. Moon makes itself a baby of clay, but the jealous goatsucker causes it to fall and break into pieces. It becomes the earth on which we live. The sun reaches the sky and marries the moon.[12]

Lévi-Strauss believes that there is no point in giving priority to any one of these versions. However, considered as a group they are obviously transformations of each other. The same set of elements, more or less, are arranged in a series of alternative relationships—the woman with two husbands becomes the husband with two wives, and so on; the "characters" are interchangeably male or female, suitor or pursued; and the outcome changes as the transformation is effected, so that one myth explains the origin of pottery clay while a transformation may end with the creation of gourds.

Clearly, Lévi-Strauss's approach is very different from Freud's. Freud in general treated each dream—or myth or legend—individually and as a coded expression of a censored wish. The wish is real, typically sexual in origin, and it supplies the meaning of the dream. Similarly, the symbols in which it is encoded usually stand directly or indirectly for genital organs or physiological functions. His delight in the German folk-tales about dreams was due to the fact that they made explicit the link between various symbols and the physiological organs and processes for which they stood.

From the point of view of Lévi-Strauss, Freud is making a fundamental error when he tries "to decipher myths by means of a single and exclusive code, while a myth will always put several codes in play, and it is from this layering of codes, one on top of another, that rules of interpretation derive." More specifically, he reproaches Freud for assuming that the deepest meaning of a myth will always find expression in a physiological code.[13]

Lévi-Strauss has, of course, deliberately selected American myths which use an oral-anal code in order to make his point, which is that the physiological code does not have a special status. It does not necessarily stand for itself; nor does it have any other straightforward, universal meaning or point of reference; nor, finally, is it the ultimate point of reference of the other codes in the myths.

I AM PARTICULARLY interested in the ethnography of southern Africa. Reading Lévi-Strauss on the Jivaro made me recognise that southern Bantu folk-tales provide a very different example of the use of oral-anal imagery. Many southern African stories contrast normal animals with cannibals. Normal animals (in Southern Bantu folk-tales, at any rate) may be killed by stopping up the anus. The cannibal, by contrast, is killed by closing its mouth. Its victims are then released by cutting open the cannibal's anus, or by opening up his stomach.

Cannibals are also contrasted with human beings along other dimensions, one being their household arrangements. A human house has a single entrance. If someone dies, a hole is cut in the rear and the body is taken out through the hole. A cannibal cave has two entries. Victims are locked in by closing the front entrance. If the front entry is blocked from outside, the cannibal dies and the victim escapes alive through the back. These contrasts between the entries and exits to the human and cannibal huts obviously recall the contrasts between the cannibal's mouth and anus and those of an animal.

Other contrasts are at play as well: for example, people escape from cannibals by flying or by burrowing under the

[11] *Dreams in Folklore*, p. 38.
[12] These stories can be found in *The Jealous Potter*, ch. 3.
[13] *The Jealous Potter*, pp. 186-7.

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earth, while cannibals are powerless if they fall into pits or climb above the ground. This code has to do with the idea that ancestor spirits, who protect human beings, live above or below the earth.[14] Obviously it would be a pity if, confronted with these stories, one were to allow the oral-anal code a privileged status, or assume that oral and anal symbolism must refer to infantile obsessions.

THE RELATIVIST party and the realist party clearly offer competing programmes for the study of symbolism. To a certain extent I have shifted the battleground to relativist territory, since though Freud had a good deal to say about myths and stories, he was more particularly interested in dreams. Accordingly, let me turn back to dreams again, and to a dream which Freud dreamt himself, in which the oral-anal code is very important. This is the famous "specimen dream" in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the dream of Irma's injection. It has been reanalysed dozens of times in neo-Freudian terms, but recently Alan A. Stone and I developed a structuralist account of it.[15]

Freud dreamed that a patient, whom he called "Irma", came up to him at a party and complained that she was still suffering choking pains in her throat, stomach and abdomen. Freud was alarmed. His first impulse was to blame her for not having accepted his "solution". He tried to examine her, but she was reluctant to open her mouth. When she did open her mouth, he saw scabs in her throat. Colleagues joined in the examination, discovered chest occlusions and finally diagnosed an abdominal infection. The senior member of the team forecast that dysentery would supervene, which would rid the patient of the poison. Finally, Freud became aware of the source of the infection. His friend Dr Otto had injected "Irma" with a dangerous preparation, probably using a dirty syringe.

Freud's own analysis of the dream supported his view that dreams were wish-fulfilments. On the previous evening, Dr Otto had suggested that "Irma" had not been helped by Freud's treatment. The dream-solution was to blame Dr Otto for the sickness, and so to exculpate Freud himself. A number of commentators have remarked that in this case at least Freud was reluctant to identify an underlying sexual theme at the heart of the dream, and several of them have attempted to put this right. It is certainly remarkable that the oral-anal code is treated so perfunctorily.

Our specific interest was in the kind of logic exhibited in the dream. First of all, we pointed out that the dream recapitulated the stages of routine medical examinations, in which doctors investigate the throat, chest and lower body. Secondly, as the examination proceeded, so more profound symptoms were increasingly revealed. There was, then, a formal progression in the dream. Thirdly, the solution—the expulsion of the toxin in dysentery—inverted the initial problem, the choking and the difficulty in opening the mouth. The dream's conclusion was a formal transformation of its opening scene.

Moreover, choking and the resistance to opening the mouth were physical metaphors for the rejection of Freud's "solution". Freud believed that "Irma" was not physically sick but mentally ill. Her symptoms were the physical expression of psychological illness. The cure was to have a "catharsis"—to talk out the problem. In his dream, "Irma" is physically ill, and the catharsis is to purge the poison physically through the anus. The mouth which will not open voluntarily for a speech catharsis is replaced by the anus which purges a physical poison in an uncontrollable fit of dysentery. The conclusion inverts the beginning.

A more detailed reading of the dream, including an analysis of what the hapless Dr Otto injected into Irma, revealed that the apparently physical cause of this physical condition was itself capable of psychological interpretation: for Dr Otto injected a sexual metabolism, trimethylamin.

The dream makes elaborate play with Freud's theory that psychological illness may present itself as physical illness, and effects a highly structured transformation. Freud had treated "Irma" for hysteria. Dr Otto believed that "Irma" was physically ill, and that Freud's treatment had been at fault. Freud's dream brilliantly resolved this unpleasant question.

Our analysis showed, moreover, that the resolution was achieved in an ordered fashion, by a series of quasi-logical steps. The dream does not simply rush to a happy ending: it works its way there. Moreover, the dream operates within an idiom which is that of Freud's own scientific theories. And it is these theories which give the oral-anal code its special function in the dream. The two ends of the digestive tract come to stand for two opposed kinds of theory and of cure: the psychodynamic and the physical. Far from reducing the dream to a physiological code, we argued that the physiological references were symbols which stood for abstract, scientific ideas.

TO A STRUCTURALIST, the physiological code is a language which can convey many messages. Yet even the most extreme relativist would have to concede that the body is a very special source of symbols: everywhere the same, in a sense, and everywhere endowed with powerful psychological properties. The Freudian would probably go further and say that not only the body, but also certain complexes of sexual desire and repression are virtually universal. Myths and dreams might then be expected to convey rather standardised messages in a repetitive set of images. The structuralist, however, would be inclined to take a relativist position here as well. The meaning of the body, the form of family relationships, all are variable; and even where the external reality is, by chance, perceived in a similar fashion in two cultures, it need not generate the same myths and dreams. The outside world provides only a jumping-off point for dreams and myths.

In *The Jealous Potter*, Lévi-Strauss makes this point with reference to Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Freud's monograph was subtitled: "Resemblances between the psychic lives

[14] See the essay, "Cannibals, beasts and twins" in my book, *South Africa and the Anthropologist* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987).

[15] Adam Kuper and Alan A. Stone, "The Dream of Irma's Injection: A Structural Analysis" in *The American Journal of Psychiatry* (October 1982).

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of savages and neurotics". This notorious identification of so-called "savages" and neurotics was based upon two ideas current at the time. One was the now discredited Lamarckian belief that the development of the organism in its lifetime recapitulated the evolution of the species. The second was the belief that contemporary so-called "savages" were survivals of ancient types of man which were otherwise known through fossil remains. If these assumptions were correct, then savages were perhaps like children, and like neurotics. If not, however, then probably not.

Commenting on Freud's claim, Lévi-Strauss remarks that "there are points on which the mental lives of savages and psychoanalysts coincide"—which he pretends is by way of complimenting psychoanalysts. In support of this coat-trailing, he remarks that Jivaro myths use "perfectly explicit notions and categories—such as oral character and anal character—that psychoanalysts will no longer be able to claim they have discovered. All they have done is to rediscover them." What is more, the Jivaro have a myth of incest and parricide which has uncanny resemblances to the myth of origin which Freud made the centre of his *Totem and Taboo*. Lévi-Strauss remarks that it is not for nothing that the Jivaro were famous in the Andes region for hunting heads and shrinking them: they are obviously exotic "shrinks".

The myth in question is a continuation of the creation story which I introduced earlier. The sun and moon eventually marry each other and have four children, the first being the sloth. The sloth marries the pottery-jar, Mika. In time, they have a child, Ahimba, the serpent. In the absence of the sloth, the serpent sleeps with his mother, the pottery-jar. The sloth finds out and turns his anger not against the guilty pair but against his own mother, whom he accuses of having condoned their crime—perhaps blaming her, Lévi-Strauss suggests, for his own incestuous desires for her. His wife's incestuous children turn against him, for his treatment of their grandmother, and kill him. Mika, the pottery-jar, kills the children for committing parricide. Thenceforth the three camps—of the father, the mother and the son—wage a relentless battle. This is the origin of society.[16]

As Lévi-Strauss insists, this myth is very like the myth of incest and parricide in *Totem and Taboo*, though with some intriguing variations. But that does not mean that either Freud or the Jivaro have cracked the primal code, or that both vaguely remember some primal crime. Rather, if human societies prohibit incest with the mother and endow the father with authority, then in myths and stories people will experiment with the relationships between these elements—indulging in the intellectual pleasure of generating transformations. Even a universal set of concerns will trigger a series of creative experiments in myths and dreams, not a predictable if coded rehearsal of some standard response.

It will be evident that I take Lévi-Strauss's side in this argument. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Lévi-Strauss does not make things easy for his supporters. First of all, his various methodological pronouncements cannot always be reconciled with each other. A degree of divergence is only to be expected, perhaps, for he has written about myths for many years now; but it is in fact quite possible to construct very different methodologies from his various prescriptions. As Jarich Oosten admits in his excellent book on Indo-European mythology, "no generally accepted method of structural analysis exists in cultural anthropology and this has been the cause of much confusion and misunderstanding among anthropologists".[17]

LÉVI-STRAUSS himself quite often seems to follow his intuitions even when they conflict with his methodology. He can even at times make remarkably blunt "realist" statements. To take one example, he comments, when the serpent sleeps with his mother, the pottery-jar, that they symbolise respectively the male and female organs, "naturally destined to unite, notwithstanding the social rules that would restrain their freedom".[18] This is a very unstructuralist interpretation!

A more fundamental problem is posed by his insistence—particularly in his earlier writings—that myths are always engaged with problems posed by real life. Such reductionism implies that a myth does have a relatively simple meaning. It must refer directly to some real event or person or idea. This is not easily reconciled with his more recent and, I think, more coherent view that myths operate, as it were, in a hall of mirrors, but that they reflect only each other. This implies that myths—and dreams—are not mechanisms for communicating messages in a secret language. They are best understood as modes of thinking, or perhaps more precisely, reflection. One critic, Dan Sperber has even claimed that:

> ". . . when we strip the work of Lévi-Strauss of the semiological burden with which he has chosen to encumber it, we will then realise that he was the first to propose the fundamentals of an analysis of symbolism which was finally freed from the absurd idea that symbols mean . . . if Lévi-Strauss thought of myths as a semiological system, the myths thought themselves in him, and without his knowledge, as a cognitive system."[19]

I have presented the differences between the two Masters as a contrast in method, but they also have two very different preoccupations. Freud is concerned with the emotions, Lévi-Strauss with the intellect. Moreover, they operate within very different national, intellectual traditions. Nevertheless, they do represent two powerful, comparable and *competitive* theories of myth and dream. They may well both be wrong, but I have come to doubt that they can possibly both be right.

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[16] *The Jealous Potter*, pp. 185-6.

[17] Jarich Oosten, *The War of the Gods*, p. 8.

[18] *The Jealous Potter*, p. 185.

[19] Dan Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism* (Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 84.

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NOTES & TOPICS

The Law & Its Profits

By Jonathan Sinclair Carey

WHEN THE LAWYERS of Britain begin to get nervous, something's up. Among the Lord Chancellor's proposals for the future of the British legal profession is one enabling barristers to accept cases on a "No win, no fee" basis. This has produced both political and legal alarm. Contingency fees, first started in the United States, have indeed made our legal profession apprehensive—with wishful anticipation, or dread, that the new system will spread to England. As million-dollar settlements become increasingly prevalent in the US law courts, some American lawyers have earned extraordinary salaries. Since they normally receive one-third or more of any settlement, and have many cases pending at any one time, the financial rewards can be unlimited. Little wonder, then, that increasing numbers of American lawyers advertise, as they have been permitted to do since 1979. The 1983 *Model Rules of Professional Conduct* of the American Bar Association rationalises any incipient moral problem thus:

> "The public's need to know about legal services can be fulfilled in part through advertising. This need is particularly acute in the case of persons of moderate means who have not made extensive use of legal services."

Not that bringing justice to the masses is the main purpose. One film-maker of television commercials for lawyers aggressively states in his recent full-page ad in a leading legal journal:

> "My custom TV spots can make you millions. 41 lawyers have become millionaires using my custom TV commercials. 19 are multi-millionaires. 26 are close (net worth $650,000 to $990,000). Most of them will be happy to talk to you directly about their good fortune."

Happy to talk to you, that is, when they're not on the telephone with their accountants, their stockbrokers, or a new client.

Such advertising brings in many potential customers. During an initial free consultation, they discuss their problem with the lawyer, who sits there, jotting down notes, while quietly assessing whether there is a case, and what it's potentially worth to the client— and to the lawyer. It becomes a game of legal poker, with the lawyer gambling a few chips in the hope of winning big. If a case will not bring in a certain profit, as determined by an accountant, then it will not normally be touched. Certain cases might be accepted as *pro bono*, for the public good, and without payment; but many US lawyers— such as the former Attorney General, Ed Meese— admit they have never done so.

Some American legal journals give help in planning practical strategies for those cases which are accepted. Articles have appeared with titles to the effect of "You, Too, Can Sue A Dentist!", and "How to Sue A Fellow Lawyer for Malpractice" (not even lawyers are above the law). So much for professional loyalties, although a certain cooperation does seem to exist. One journal carries a separate news-letter, in which lawyers can request assistance: "Acupuncturist placed needle close to client's heart. Arrhythmia subsequently diagnosed. Can you help my case?" All serious business—in the name of litigation and fee-sharing.

IN BRITAIN, Lord Denning has become one of the forceful speakers against contingency fees, arguing that justice will not be served. Where a barrister has a "big incentive to win the case for his own profit", claims will be inflated, witnesses called, and harrowing stories told about the pain and suffering a plaintiff has experienced.

Lord Denning also mentions the possibility of false witnesses. Frankly, he should be more concerned about the omnipresent "expert witness", who is willing to offer truths at a price. Classified ads in the back pages of most American legal journals advertise their services under such neat headings as ECONOMICS, ENGINEERING, HUMAN FACTORS, MEDICAL, and POLICE. And there are specialist firms who, with all the sensitivity of a professional dating service, will provide a more discreet expert.

Experts abound. Take the addictionologist (one of only about 40 certified in the US) who, as he declares in a large classified ad, will answer the question:

> "Is your client CHEMICALLY DEPENDENT: judgement/perception impaired? voluntary *v.* involuntary intoxication, toxic *v.* psychiatric psychosis, psychiatric illness & legal insanity *v.* organic syndrome & addictive disorder?"

It sounds here as if there must be some plausible defence against a drunk-driving charge (even if no jury would understand it). But, coming from the lips of an "addictionologist", it must be expert opinion. (Stand back, though, when an expert witness from one side seeks to refute an expert witness from the opposition: there can be a battle of knowledge and professional egos.)

For an "expert" the possibilities are endless. A man with any old doctorate will analyse "the readability and Communi-

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cation Effectiveness of any Warning Labels". There are elevator experts, electrical injury and damage consultants, swimming-pool examiners, tyre-mounting and blow-out specialists, aquatic safety experts, and a "Jail Malpractice" authority—he identifies himself as a former sheriff and jail administrator. A number of medical specialists will testify against others in their field: one agency advertises its "2,500 Board Certified Medical Experts".

One entrepreneur runs mini-courses to show how anyone can be recognised as an expert witness in some field or other. The bus-conductor becomes a "mass transportation expert", the secretary a recognised authority in deciphering handwriting or sexual abuse. All it takes is a title, and a business card stating: *Have Expert Knowledge—Will Travel.*

THE FEES are startling, as I discovered personally. Several years ago, when I published a one-page article in a British medical journal, an American lawyer contacted me to be his expert witness in an impending personal injury case. At this point, no fee was discussed. He flew me to the West Coast, and put me up for five days in the plushest hotel in town, I met his client twice, and testified for two-and-a-half hours. At the airport, afterwards, I was handed an envelope.

Inside was a cheque for the dollar equivalent of £4,780. The original article had taken me four hours to write.

Certainly I had unique professional knowledge, and four academic degrees. In addition to expenses, I would have expected to receive about £250 a day. But think about it. Since a settlement worth millions of dollars was possible, the lawyer could afford to be generous. He expected to win, and my fee would be deducted from his client's earnings, not from his.

Ironically, for all my amazement (and embarrassment), I was advised by another lawyer to demand more in the future. After all, there is an implicit American maxim: "You're only worth what you're paid." If you don't command a large sum, there must be something wrong with your professional standing or abilities in the courtroom.

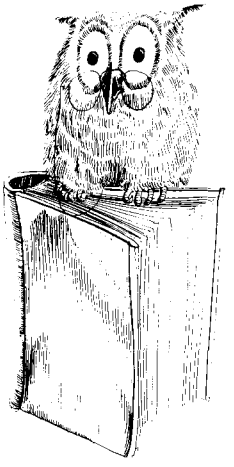
No wonder the "profession" of expert witness has emerged over the last decade. It's lucrative and interesting work, although one may encounter certain occupational hazards. I heard of one eminent pathologist who was physically attacked in the courtroom by an impassioned member of the public while he was testifying against the attacker's friend.

British lawyers and expert witnesses have cause to be nervous; not because of potential physical abuse in the course of their duties, but, rather, because of what the contingency fee basis involves. Certainly there are those who would rejoice in maximising legal profits, and admire the American approach (which still states, somewhat ironically, in its *Model Rules of Professional Conduct* that "A lawyer's fees shall be reasonable"). Yet others—like Lord Denning—fear for justice itself when financial gain becomes the lawyer's motivation.

I share that fear. Perhaps I am too rooted in tradition, or merely one who bites the proverbial hand that has fed him inflated fees. But I would rather be a witness for justice than its whore.

Remembering Desmond Williams

By Patrick Cosgrave



ON A WAN October day in 1962, 150 or so students were waiting in one of those amphitheatrical lecture rooms which marked the character of the old (and now relinquished) buildings of University College, Dublin. They were waiting to hear the legendary T. Desmond Williams, the Professor of Modern History. Twenty minutes passed, and there was no sign of the Professor.

Two of us, being bolder than the rest, set out to find him. I was one of the two. The other—Ronan Fanning—now holds Williams's old chair. Williams retired in 1985, and Fanning succeeded him last year (the chair was in abeyance between 1985 and 1988). We found him, wandering down a corridor, hobbling on his stick, smoking. We told him where he was supposed to be lecturing. The three of us returned to the amphitheatre. Such was his reputation that the students were all still there. I wrote down the following dialogue at the time, and it is true.

Williams looked at his putative audience. He addressed them. "Am I supposed to be lecturing here?" There was a respectful murmur of assent. He turned to me. "Pray fetch me a chair." He stammered quite badly and could not readily pronounce words beginning with "b" or "p", so it was "Oh, pppray fetch me a chair." I went out into the corridor, found an unattended room, and nicked a chair.

He settled himself on it. Settling, for Desmond Williams, was a difficult and important business. He had a disease of the bones in his legs that made any movement painful. He had his stick. He had to have his cigarettes. He worried if he did not have matches to hand. He was extremely untidy, an old tweed jacket, frayed, baggy trousers, eyes inspecting those around him through unfocused glasses. "And", he said, "pppray, what am I lecturing on?"

Fanning was bold. "The Counter-Reformation", he said.

"Ah yes", said Williams. He paused for a moment. His stick was still in his right hand. Using only the left hand—which contained his packet of cigarettes and matches—he lit up. He addressed his audience as though they were in his study. "You remember Lord Acton", he began, and it was as though Acton was there with us. For nearly two hours he held us with the most sustained and brilliant discourse I have ever heard. Every sentence was beautifully constructed and he used no notes. Nobody—not even the dimmest—left the amphitheatre until he was finished.

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Williams was not a religious man, but he understood the force of religion—better, perhaps, than any other historian except his own mentor, Herbert Butterfield. In that 1962 *tour de force* he used a metaphor that Butterfield was, later, himself to deploy. "You cannot understand", he said, "the Reformation or the Counter-Reformation without understanding the power of religion. Imagine walking up to a modern house and seeing it lit up, seeing the lights on in every room. Why should it be lit in this way? What gives the light? We know it is electricity. But what is electricity? It is potent, but it cannot be seen. It is in the circuits of that house. Thus was religion in the circuits of Europe in the 16th century. . . ." To a vast learning, Williams added a homeliness of style which made the subject live, as he talked about it.

Homeliness is not the word which comes most readily to hand when one remembers him. He was, as I have said, untidy to extremes. He was riotously unpunctual. I recall a splendid occasion in the early '60s when he summoned three of his students to the Kildare Street Club for drinks. He was to go on to the American Embassy to lunch with President Kennedy. As time rolled by we were, one after another, instructed to go to the telephone to tell the Embassy that Professor Williams was unavoidably delayed. We were awestruck by his casual defiance of power. But he was not grandstanding. "He has a dull mind", said Williams, "and I want to spend as little time with him as possible." You may call that bad manners—as it certainly was—but there was a certain undeniable grandeur about it. The President, I should add, waited.

A similar defiance of conventional behaviour was evident throughout his career. When told at Peterhouse that the then Master forbade smoking on his lawn, Williams, day after day, ensconsed himself under the Master's favourite oak tree and smoked and read. When, at the age of 28, it was suggested to him that he apply for a junior teaching post at University College, Dublin (one of the then three constituent colleges of the National University of Ireland), he replied by telegram: "WILL ACCEPT CHAIR. WILLIAMS." Whether outfaced by this effrontery, or wise beyond imagining, the powers that were made him Professor of Modern History.

Whether by intention or not the outcome was dramatic. Williams immediately formed an alliance with the Professor of Modern Irish History, Robin Dudley Edwards. Together they introduced tutorial teaching to the National University. Between them they cultivated a passion for archives, and inculcated into the minds of their students an aptitude for rigorous scrutiny of those archives. Edwards, it is fair to say, did much more work on this than did Williams; but it was the partnership that was vital.

AND, YET AND ALAS, William wrote very little. What he did write had to be forced out of him. There was, for example, a brilliant series of lectures on the balance of power after World War I. The origin of the series lay in a short paper he had written for Rohan Butler when, just after World War II, he was working in the Foreign Office, helping Butler with the magisterial volume of the *Official History* on the origins of the 1939-45 conflict. His thesis—unacceptable in 1946, but truistic now—was that 1918 ushered in a new balance, in which the vital elements were the "peripheral powers"—the United States and the USSR. Later, that considerable German scholar Ludwig Dehio wrote, with Williams's guidance, a work of force expounding the argument.

While Williams said he had actually written down his view of the balance of power (as he said he had written down his account of the partition of Poland—which, he claimed, had been lost in the post—his *Life* of Hitler and his assessment of the Council of Trent), I was sufficiently sceptical as I watched him declaim on diplomatic history to preserve, not only my own notes, but those of three fellow students. Four years later, when he was visiting me in Cambridge, I told him I had done this. "Well", he replied, "I've just finished the book, but I would be grateful if you would, pppray, let me have the notes, so that I can refresh my memory." I gave him a photocopy; and that remains the only occasion on which I can say I outmanoeuvred Desmond Williams.

There was something deep in him that refused to publish. He was a first-class journalist—he even edited a magazine in Dublin for a time—and his radio scripts are memorable. I now wish, however, that we had had tape recorders at his lectures. For I cannot convey at second hand the beauty and concision of his use of English (one, by the way, of the nine languages he spoke), the scope of his mind, the profundity of his thought. He and Dudley Edwards built a great (and I use the word advisedly) History department. Both of these distinguished men are dead. Williams died in 1987; Edwards in 1988. I have written elsewhere about Edwards. I still have the Williams notes, and I can hear him say, "Pppray, Pppatrick, let me just check them over", I will, Desmond, I will.

Stalin's Revolution

By O. L. Smaryl

IN 1924, AFTER Lenin's death, the Politburo—the highest organ of the Soviet Communist Party—consisted of seven members. By 1940, only one of them survived. What had happened to the rest? One was murdered with a pickaxe, one was driven to suicide; four of them were shot after trials in which they confessed to the most horrible crimes.

The 17th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union took place in 1934. Of the 1,966 delegates, 1,108 were later arrested on charges of counter-revolutionary activities.

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How could all this happen? Even the experts were baffled and confused. It is worth quoting from the report of the American Ambassador, Joseph Davies, accredited at the time to the court of Stalin:

> "Viewed objectively, and based upon the application of the tests of credibility which past experience had afforded me, I arrived at the reluctant conclusion that the state had established its case, at least to the extent of proving the existence of a widespread conspiracy and plot among the political leaders against the Soviet government . . . . There still remains in my mind, however, some reservation based upon the facts, that both the system of enforcement of penalties for the violation of law and the psychology of these people are so widely different from our own that perhaps the tests which I would apply would not be accurate if applied here. Assuming, however, that basically human nature is much the same everywhere, I am still impressed with the many indications of credibility which obtained in the course of the testimony. To have assumed that this proceeding was invented and staged as a project of dramatic political fiction would be to presuppose the creative genius of Shakespeare and the genius of a Belasco in stage production."

Obviously, the Ambassador had underestimated the stage-management techniques of the *NKVD*, and he certainly could not understand the psychology of the victims. It needed a man endowed with an extraordinary amount of imagination, and possessing some first-hand experience of both Russia and Communism, to offer an explanation. It needed Arthur Koestler. His exegesis took the form of a novel, published in Britain in 1940 under the title *Darkness at Noon*.

It is hardly surprising that the book has never been available in the Soviet Union. What *is* surprising is that in August last year *Literaturnaya Gazeta* devoted a full-page article to Koestler, and announced the forthcoming serialisation of *Darkness at Noon* in *Neva*, a Leningrad literary magazine. It seems that, having allowed in 1987 the publication of Rybakov's novel, *The Children of the Arbat*, and finding that the Soviet system survived the shock, the authorities are now willing to go further along the same path.

The two books are written on the same topic; yet they are quite different, and that difference is worth exploring.

RYBAKOV'S BOOK rose to fame as the first novel published in the Soviet Union to give a realistic—and consequently chilling—account of life in the 1930s. It offers a panoramic picture of Soviet society through the story of half-a-dozen twenty-year-olds who lived at that time in Moscow's fashionable Arbat district. The hero is Sasha Pankratov—tall, dark and handsome, honest beyond any shadow of doubt, a devoted member of the Communist Party, an Engineering student.

Sasha's troubles start when Krivoruchko, once a member of the opposition, is accused of delaying completion of a new students' hostel. "It's sabotage", says the Party Secretary. "No", says honest Sasha, "it's lack of building materials." Trying to defend an ex-member of the opposition is bad enough, but Sasha gets into even deeper waters by failing to appreciate the general rule that lip service to the cause of Socialism is more important than actually working for it. After some trivial accusations he is arrested, interrogated by the Secret Police, found guilty without any evidence, and sentenced to three years exile in Siberia.

The second hero—or let's say anti-hero—is Stalin himself, whose character is drawn not so much by showing him in action but rather by presenting his thoughts. The best illustrations are probably those where Stalin takes up an innocent remark, toys with it as a child plays with a balloon, and slowly talks himself into believing that a major assault upon the Party is being prepared. It is no less illuminating to follow Stalin's thoughts as they dwell upon his role in the Building of the Socialist State and his plans for the future.

> "Stalin paced his study again and stopped at the window. Yes, Lenin had led the October Revolution, and Lenin had carried it out, that had been his historical service . . . . But Lenin had died. History is a great director. She had removed Lenin from the scene in good time and provided a new leader who would lead Russia along a genuinely socialist path. More than one revolution was needed to achieve this. Stalin had already carried out one revolution, no smaller in magnitude than the October Revolution itself, when he liquidated individual agriculture, liquidated the kulaks . . . . Millions of people had died, but history would forgive him . . . . History, however, would not forgive him if he left Russia weak and powerless before her enemies. Now it was time to create a new, special organisation of authority. And it was time to destroy the old one. He must start to liquidate the old organisation by getting rid of those who opposed *him*. Zinoviev and Kamenev were the most vulnerable . . . . They would confess to anything."

The third character of interest is Yuri Sharok, an ex-schoolmate of Sasha—a dissembler, a man without scruples or principles who, after graduating in Law, becomes a member of the Secret Police. He makes good use of these improved chances of practising depravity, recruiting a former mistress as an informer, and entertains his current mistress at one of the "safe" apartments of the *NKVD*.

There are, of course, many other characters (great Russian novels tend to have hundreds of them), but the message of the book can be gleaned from these three.

What is Rybakov's thesis? Firstly, that Stalin out of sheer paranoia wanted to destroy anyone who had ever shown the slightest deviation from the Party line set by Stalin himself. Secondly, that anyone who had reservations about the guilt of a deviant was immediately declared guilty. Thirdly, that the best way to show one's innocence was to join the clamour for punishing the "guilty". Fourthly, that those eager to execute commands from above were mostly careerists devoid of any moral principles. And fifth, that, come what may, an honest Communist like Sasha will not be crushed by adversity.

Can Rybakov make his theses stick? Almost. His Stalin is beautifully done. The vanity, the duplicity and, above all, the paranoia are there for all to see. Sasha is not an unlikely

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character either; there must have been quite a few like him around at the time. And all the other children of the Arbat are plausible—with the exception of Yuri Sharok: he is too vile to ring true. Rybakov needs him as a scapegoat for the failings of the *NKVD*. (He will, I expect, play a significant role in the sequel to this novel, reputedly on its way.)

What conclusions are Soviet readers supposed to draw? That the trouble was at the top. Had there been no Stalin among the Politburo members, and had people been more vigilant in preserving socialist legality, everything would have been sweetness and light.

LET US LOOK AT the same period through Koestler's eyes. Koestler is much more economic with his characters. *Darkness at Noon* is essentially a series of essays put into the mouths of Rubashev (a leading member of the old guard), Ivanov (a Secret Police man who will himself perish in the purges), and Gletkin (another Secret Police man who succeeds in extracting the desired confession from Rubashev). The subject of the essays is cause and consequence in Communist theory and practice. If *A* is done, *B* follows. If *B* is done, *C* follows. And so on and on down the lane of historical inevitability.

Rubashev, held in prison, sees the situation clearly:

> "Revolutionary theory had frozen to a dogmatic cult with a simplified, easily graspable catechism, and with No. 1 as the high priest celebrating the mass."

But that recognition does not stop Rubashev from admiring Stalin's ruthlessness:

> "It is said that No. 1 has Machiavelli's Prince lying permanently by his bedside. So he should: since then, nothing really important has been said about the rules of political ethics. We were the first to replace the nineteenth century's liberal ethics of 'fair play' by the revolutionary ethics of the twentieth century. In that also we were right, a revolution conducted according to the rules of cricket is an absurdity. Politics can be relatively fair in the breathing spaces of history; at its critical turning points there is no other rule possible than the old one, that the end justifies the means."

Koestler's views are clear. "The Victory of Socialism in One Country" could be achieved only by using the foulest means—including deceit and duplicity, forgery and falsifications, torture and murder. Stalin won through because he was the only leader ruthless enough to carry through the forced industrialisation. The rest fell by the wayside because they had scruples, because they were willing to go so far, but not beyond.

Rubashev confesses to the most heinous crimes because he realises that this is the last service he can perform for the Revolution. He accepts responsibility for producing the generation of Gletkins (referred to as Neanderthalers) and he recognises that the Gletkins' methods are the only ones that were likely to succeed.

WHO IS RIGHT, Rybakov or Koestler? Did Stalin betray the Revolution in order to glorify his own person? Or were his acts the logical extensions of the Bolshevik revolutionary ideal? I tend to side with Koestler, but I do not regard Rybakov's interpretation as completely indefensible.

One more word about *Darkness at Noon*. Ever since its publication it has been regarded as the anti-Communist novel *par excellence*; but that is not necessarily so, as some truly convinced Communists have pointed out. Is it conceivable that a strong faith could be further reinforced by reading *Darkness at Noon*? Such a reader could argue that Communism is bound to win if it can command a loyalty like Rubashev's.

And that raises a third, and rather intriguing, possibility. Perhaps neither Rybakov nor Koestler got it right. Did Stalin perhaps sacrifice his reputation for the survival of the Soviet system? The Rubashevs are now being rehabilitated. They are regaining their places in the Communist Pantheon, while Stalin is cast out into the cold. Did Stalin realise that one day his name would be mud, yet pursue his policies just the same?

Unlikely—but who knows?

A Little Song On Censorship

You are not that terrible, censorship, not at all
No dungeons or drops of salty water
Dripping down the sombre, stony walls
No swishing whip, nor bloodthirsty spells
But the sun in the curtains, ash-wood desk,
Kettle whistling merrily, homely smell of coffee
Lingering in the corners, and the ripples of laughter
Of a lady clerk who is corpulent
And holds ordinary scissors in her hand.

Adam Zagajewski
Translated by Tadeusz Jagodzinski

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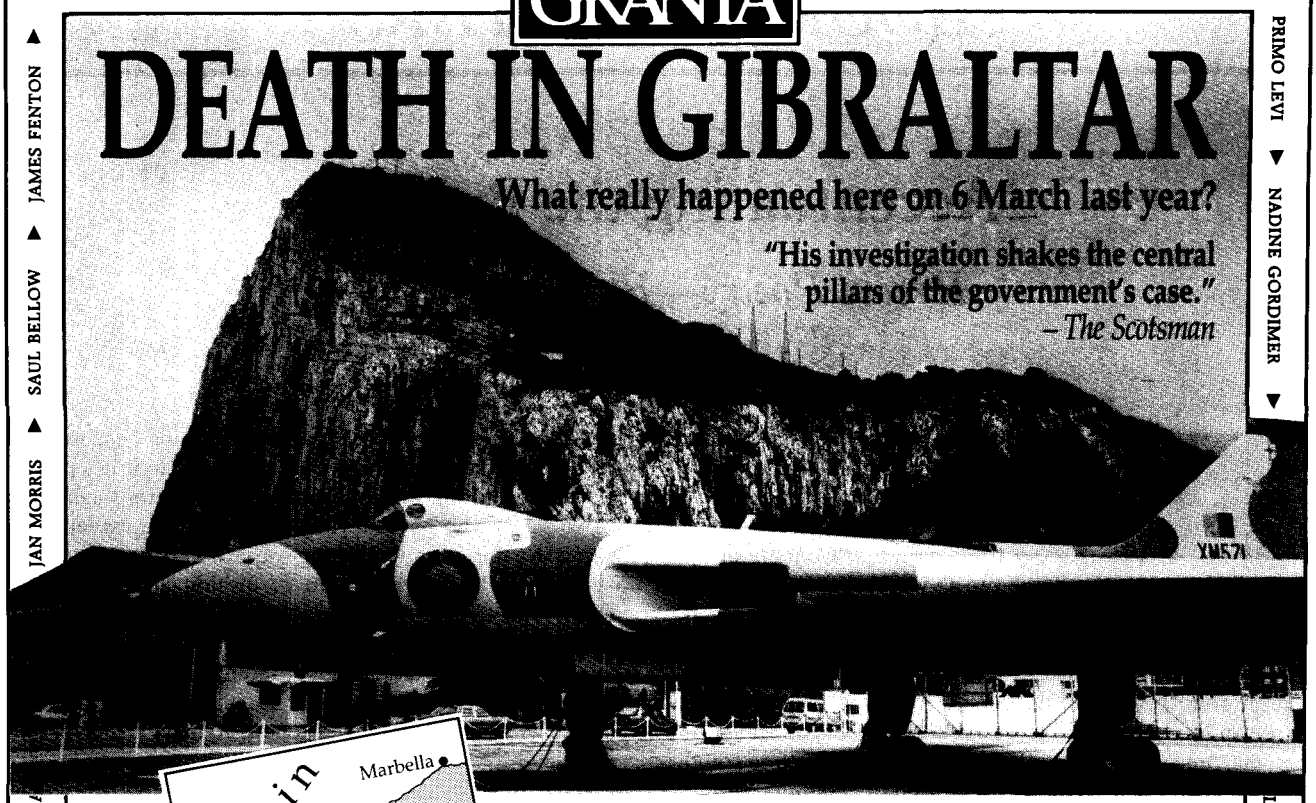
GRANTA

DEATH IN GIBRALTAR

What really happened here on 6 March last year?

"His investigation shakes the central pillars of the government's case."
– *The Scotsman*



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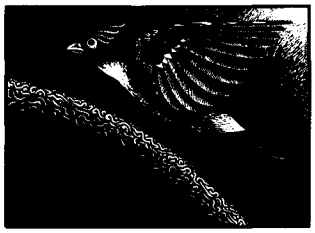
Accentuating the Positive

Recent Poetry—By JOHN MOLE



IN HIS WISE and heartening introduction to *The Poetry Book Society Anthology 1988-1989*,[1] David Constantine writes: "Contemporary verse, whether it will last or not, has peculiar importance in that it shows what we face today, it shows what might be done, it discovers our truth: the harsh facts we would rather not see and the authentic life we *might* be capable of. In philistine, mercenary and cynical times poetry is a ground and means of opposition. It can persuade you of two things simultaneously: that there is something worth fighting for, and that the fight has not yet been lost."

This needs saying, and Constantine says it well. A true poem can never be a quick read, still less does it seek to oblige. Although in the speedy world of journalism it may be short enough to serve, conveniently, as a column-filling mark of "quality", it enlarges the meagre space which surrounds it and insists upon its unique authenticity. For poets, this is the condition of their service and the continuing renewal of opportunity. As W. H. Auden declares:

> *After all, it's rather a privilege*
> *amid the affluent traffic*
> *to serve this unpopular art which cannot be turned into*
> *background noise for study*
> *or hung as a status trophy by rising executives,*
> *cannot be "done" like Venice*
> *or abridged like Tolstoy, but stubbornly still insists upon*
> *being read or ignored . . .*

In a climate of cleverness, instant communication and the feverish collage of marketing imagery, poetry sells nothing but offers a unique chance to stop and listen. In Seamus Heaney's often-quoted phrase, it can "set the darkness echoing" and catch the hearer miraculously off-guard. To return to David Constantine, "You know the real thing because it surprises you. That surprise is very significant: in it lies proof of the infinite shifting variety of life, and of poetry's agility."

Two poets who have, throughout their long careers, been witness to this infinite shifting variety and never cut their poems according to the cloth of fashion are John Heath-Stubbs[2] and George Barker.[3] Both are fighters, in Constantine's sense of the term, and have survived into old age with their relish for the authentic life undimmed. Their combined *Collected Poems* total just under 1,450 pages, accentuate the positive with an untrammelled generosity, and are never dull.

These are huge, talkative books, abounding with lyricism, learning, an unabashed emphasis on the spiritual, and a determination never to confuse seriousness with solemnity. Heath-Stubbs, though he inclines to epigram, can be elegantly garrulous, and Barker, whose leanings are towards extended dogmatic rhapsody, often rushes full pelt into unstoppable passages of banal overstatement; but what is so envigorating about both these poets is their sheer faith in the poetic calling. They are, though temperamentally very different, a pair of subversive cubs who have grown into properly awkward, unclassifiable literary lions. Incapable of parsimony, both celebrate what Barker, in his poem "To David Gascoyne", calls "the human perennial" and seek to counter, through force of imagination, what Heath-Stubbs in his address to the same influential poet characterises as "the voices, the voices—accusing denouncing,/Mouthing obscenities, nattering and chattering".

In the poem immediately next door to this, written for Barker himself on his 70th birthday, Heath-Stubbs adds the fuel of approval to his friend's fire:

> *Continue,*
> *George, to instruct and delight*
> *Exasperate, excruciate. In the centre of each poem,*
> *Among the smoking cinders, lies*
> *A new-hatched Dionysian deity, imprudently*
> *Wobbling his thyrsus.*

Of the two, Barker is, by reputation, the more celebratedly imprudent—his new Collected, unlike its predecessor, includes *The True Confession* in which some of his best, most candid writing is to be found. But in the introduction to *Collected Poems 1943-1987*, although Heath-Stubbs observes

[1] *The Poetry Book Society Anthology 1988-1989*. Edited with an Introduction by DAVID CONSTANTINE. Hutchinson, £6.95.
[2] *Collected Poems 1943-1987*. By JOHN HEATH-STUBBS. Carcanet, £25.00.
[3] *Collected Poems*. By GEORGE BARKER. Faber, £27.50.

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that "as for the purpose of poetry, I can only fall back on the familiar Horatian tag that it is 'to instruct by pleasing'", he nevertheless side-steps the sententious with a knowing wink: "I aim to tease you sometimes as well as to please you."

HEATH-STUBBS CAN BE a wicked parodist, and does a host of birds, bees and insects in different voices (my own favourite among these is "Robert Herrick's Pig" wryly and earthily observing its master as he "squeals his little songs to Julia,/ And other possibly existent ladies,/And I join with him in the accompaniment—*Hunk hunk hunk, snortle snortle snortle,/ Gruntle gruntle gruntle, wee wee wee wee!*). His humour, though, is always firmly rooted, playful but seldom whimsical. He can wobble a modest thyrsus himself, and he relishes the Martial as well as the Horatian art. Much of his most elegant writing has a saturnine air and a sardonic edge, setting up a kind of antiphony between the lyke-wake dirge and the courtly love lyric:

When my heart was young I wasted my body
In every sense of the word Love

Now my body is older I waste my heart
In every sense of the word Love

My mind and my spirit reproach me both
In every sense of the word Love

There will come a wind and disperse all four
In every sense of the word Love

They will meet again on the Judgement Day
In every sense of the word Love

For Heaven can burn, and Hell can burn
In every sense of the word Love

Judgement Judgement Judgement Judgement
In every sense of the word Love . . .

It is this kind of echoing tension which sounds throughout John Heath-Stubbs's best work, and in "David", one of his "Triumph Songs for the Nine Worthies", he seems to define it exactly:

Smooth stones in the brook;
Ten strings on the harp.

"Death!" whines the sling;
The harp utters "Praise!"

The sling and the harp, death and praise, mortality and eroticism, are the intimate opposites of his poetry, and they are nowhere more evident than in his remarkable long poem *Artorius*. Here his love for "platonic England" (Geoffrey Hill's phrase, but borrowed tellingly as the epigraph for one of his own shorter poems), his keen sense of the overlap and interplay between Christian and pagan cultures, between the classical and contemporary worlds, come together in a fine display of erudition and formal skills—a sustained and lofty

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alliterative verse, prose discourse, masque and anti-masque, pageantry and song. The result is a dense, layered, often theatrical meditation on myth and its continuing relevance to our lives.

The whole enterprise is heroically unfashionable but far from being wilfully archaic, and—as befits the Arthurian theme, abandoned by Milton and bequeathed by Tennyson—with the elegiac note struck throughout, For Heath-Stubbs, though, elegy is never defeatist, and the poem ends just about as far from the Tennysonian dying fall as you can get:

She ceased; and Silkie and his two brothers
Shook themselves out of their trance, and saw
The strangers standing by.
Then Saehund gave a soft and sudden "Bao!"
They slid into the sea, following the raft
Far out from shore. They bobbed and plunged,
Joyfully, in the rolling waves.
The unfallen creatures danced in the salt element:
The source and origin of all life.

Hang up Euterpe, on the coral bough your harp:
Take down, Calliope your trumpet.

One of the *Collected Poems*'s most delightful sequences is "Bird's Plenary Session", but in fact the whole book is a plenary session, a colloquy of wit and wisdom, and John Heath-Stubbs has become the wisest old bird of them all.

NOTHING IN GEORGE BARKER'S WORK achieves, or seeks to, the quaint magnificence of *Artorius*, but the reach of his poetry is, in its different direction, equally spectacular. In early sequences such as "Calamiterror", "A Vision of England '38" and "Holy Poems", he comes on stage like a prophet loudly inspired—punning, alliterating, shouting out that "the chaos of experience is kaleidoscope". This is not Platonic England but "the tremendous panoply of England" falling vertical, "The historical curtain exuding blood on my pillow". His response to historical events, as they came to a head in 1939, is sensational, and often as deafening as the rhetorical climate that occasioned them—a feverish imagination, seeming to activate the scenario from which it recoils. In this Barker offers a fascinating contrast to the more measured intensity of Auden and MacNeice's foreboding:

In the red theatre of the flesh I stage
The anatomical tragedy of this sad age
Whose sweat of tears cannot put out rage.

Now the guns rock my vision as I look
With blood-prognosticating eyes on Europe
Whose weeping map invades all my books.

In some ways, this kind of writing—of which there is a great deal—is not unlike the worst excesses of the so-called Apocalypse movement to which it became attached, but what distinguishes Barker is the authentic vagabond-visionary perspective he achieves, where Villon meets Blake, the street leads to the confessional, and the rhetoric alights suddenly on a modest particular and illuminates it:

I see the flamingo involved with the hanging fruits,
The hand of horror the claw of bananas and
Mr Salisbury the proprietor greengrocer,
The magnificently actual unit the human.

George Barker's later work, though still often remorselessly *con brio* and continuing to apostrophise with a vengeance, manages more of that humane fusion of the oracular with the domestic which gave such a rumbustious luminosity to his famous sonnet "To My Mother". The *Collected Poems* (apart from two appendices) concludes with the familiar incantatory dogma of "Anno Domini", but the closing pages are also graced by the mellow inclusiveness of the "Villa Stellar" poems in which Eros seems surprised by an unaccustomed, almost valedictory gentleness, and Venus is in the ascendant:

The Contessa sat by the window fingering the black
notes of the piano.
I saw the sunset begin to fight its way over the
Mediterranean
in a noiseless allegory of the futility of speech
and indeed of everything save the cloudy mutations
we think we believe in:
those cloudy mutations in which all aspirations and
all dreams
and all human determinations, as the sun falls,
fade into the supercession of night and stars. Are they,
these cloudy presences
the hereafter of yesterday's equally futile illusions,
the hallucinations of which there is no original
excepting that first dream of an ejection from a garden
where we once walked without knowledge?
The Contessa rose and led me out into the arbour
where we sat without speech, looking at the sky.

It is typical of Barker that silence should be conveyed so explicitly and with so many words, but the emphasis is firmly on the authentic life and the search for meaning. The poet may protest too much. He is loud even in his privacy. But his total commitment to the poetic life is rare enough to discourage carping.

SEVERAL OTHER Collected and Selected Poems have appeared recently, two of the best coming, like Heath-Stubbs's, from Carcanet. E. J. Scovell began publishing in the 1940s, seemed to stop with *The River Steamer* in 1956, then reappeared in 1982 when Secker & Warburg published *The Space Between*. Now her *Collected Poems*[4] provides an opportunity to measure the intensity of her quiet commitment to the inner life.

At first glance, her world is one of familiar, even cosy, appearances—gardens, flowers, domestic interiors, framed perspectives, family occasions—but her intelligence, and the

[4] *Collected Poems*. By E. J. SCOVELL. Carcanet, £16.95.

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grace of her accuracy, fuses what might seem random perceptions into a unity, a singleness of theme which is nothing less than a sustained, restlessly wondering meditation on the mysteries of creation:

> *The grass heads, filled with air-like fountains pause*
> *Over their drenched green—blade and moss,*
> *And those least flowers that take the grass*
> *For cover and for sky, stars in its space—*
>
> *Till water, air and hanging meadow seem*
> *Of one continuous substance, each*
> *So fixed in flowing, and the touch*
> *Seems deft and light of time creating them.*

"Fixed in flowing" catches the nature of her gift exactly. Reminiscent of Edward Thomas's wish to be held "fixed and free/In a rhyme", hers is a poetry of surfaces animated by the pressure of immanence. Attracted to "where deepest silence lies" or "the look of utterance on the silent flower", she transcribes minute particulars with an enchanted but entirely unsentimental directness, and although the range of her subject matter may appear limited when compared with that of Heath-Stubbs or Barker, her scrupulous attentiveness ensures that every poem is a new beginning, a fresh encounter however brief:

> *One day at noon I crossed*
> *A sandy yard planted with citrus trees*
> *Behind a small hotel. I walked slowly in the sun*
> *With feet in the hot sand which the leaf-cutting ants*
> *Crossed too, under their little sails of green, filing*
> *Intent; and I thought, this*
> *I will keep, I will register with time: I am here;*
> *And always, shall have been here—that is the wonder—*
> *Never, now, not have been here; for now I am here,*
> *Crossing the sandy yard*
> *Between the citrus trees, behind the small hotel.*

And behind poetry of this quality lies Rilke's question:

> *Are we, perhaps,* here *just for saying: House,*
> *Bridge, Fountain, Gate, Jug, Fruit tree, Window? . . .*
> *but for* saying, *remember,*
> *oh, for such saying as never the things themselves*
> *hoped so intensely to be.*

E. J. Scovell's poems certainly, in her own words, "register with time", and so indeed should this very welcome collection of them.

WRITING "In Memory of Stevie Smith", Patricia Beer[5] observes that "She struck compassion/In strange places". The verb is aptly ambiguous, containing both the sense of discovery and the note of admonition. Patricia Beer's work is, of course, very different from Stevie Smith's, but both poets share a wily delight in irony, a keen appreciation of the droll and the dotty which can often be found at the heart of serious matters:

[5] *Collected Poems*. By PATRICIA BEER. Carcanet, £16.95.

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Arnold J. Heidenheimer, Michael Johnston, Victor LeVine, editors

Recognition that political corruption constitutes a valid and challenging subject for political and social scientists is now widely accepted, in part because changes in political climates and conditions of competition have made corruption more visible. Instead of seeing corruption as a phenomenon primarily characteristic of developing countries, the contributors look closely at Western European countries, the United States, and the leading communist systems.

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Dear Husband, Please come to me.
Yesterday I fell on these stern rocks
And lie in hospital. I was wrong to walk
Here alone. Please come, for both our sakes.

As I fell I noticed the seagulls above me.
Legs dangling, wings pumping, they yelled
Out of white breast feathers and spotted beaks.
Then their cliff drew them back. . . .

There is more than an echo of "Not Waving But Drowning" in this, and the short, childlike sentences of the first stanza with their apologetic note of self-chastisement and fear of rebuke are at the same time moving and odd.

The body of Patricia Beer's work is firm—if precariously sober-toned—in its celebration of the "continuity of love", of history, faith and literature, but as she writes in a delightful new poem, "Looking Sideways", "The corner of the eye lets in lunacy/More accurately than the whole body", and much of her best, most memorable poetry becomes so precisely because of what she catches in the corner of her eye and allows to shape her field of vision. This is especially true when—as she often does—she retraces the course of her own life from a strict, secure world, which she recalls only to reject with baffled affection, to a less assured but more assuringly unresolved present.

In "Called Home", for example, the phrase "squinnying down" in the penultimate line is Patricia Beer's unmistakable watermark, the tender, bizarre twist in the poem's tail:

"Called Home" the Plymouth Brethren used to say
When someone died. Warm, bright corridors
Led to eternal domesticity
And from outside we heard the sound of tears
Being wiped away by God. Shall we gather
At the river? In the sweet by-and-by?
Yes, I sang then. Beyond the bright blue sky
Dead families would always be together.

Loving an atheist is my hope currently.
Believers cannot help. I must have some
Ally who will keep non-company
With me in a non-life, a fellow tombstone
Stuck senseless in cold grass, squinnying down
At father, uncle, grandfather, called home.

And the ghost of Thomas Hardy is there too. Patricia Beer knows how to transcribe the frisson of life's little ironies.

Jack Clemo[6] is the author of two engrossing spiritual autobiographies, *Confession of a Rebel* and *The Marriage of a Rebel*, as well as a novel, *Wilding Graft*, which was admired by T. F. Powys. Writing of Powys in *The Marriage of a Rebel*, Clemo stresses a fundamental affinity: "His work had impressed me for many years despite my rejection of his pessimism and obsession with death. He too had chosen the unworldly borderline, the terrible wrestle with God." Clemo ends his poem "A Kindred Battlefield", dedicated to Powys, with this stanza:

Chalk heart and clay heart share
A wilful strategy:
The strife you learned to bear
Breaks westward over me.

That wilful strategy, acted out in the stark, scabbed landscape of the Cornish clay-pits, is the theme of Clemo's strenuous poetry of grapple and hard-won grace.

The earlier poems, shot through with a self-wounding, exclusively tortured spirit of Calvinism, intensified by the awareness of his own encroaching blindness and deafness, are an extraordinary achievement. Dismissive of the civilised church- or chapel-goer—"so civilised . . . so dextrous in control/Of the tricky signals"—and seeing himself as "outside, a truant soul,/Deep in the Word, stung by the dirt/Of primal clues", Clemo nevertheless struggles for the kind of reconciliation voiced in this closing stanza of "Beyond Trethosa Chapel", which provides a good example of his charged, evangelical language:

Mediate, then, beloved; let tension cease,
Dune-grit and pews be reconciled:
Let not the peak be cut away,
Nor the fold reviled.
Harsh clang of the prophetic tip
May yet be blent, through you,
With hymn of fellowship
My childhood knew.
Bless with your dreams my broken clay
As you take the broken bread;
Fuse the corporate flame with our lonely ray;
Show me that Bethel wine is red.

This "beloved" is clearly the elusive object of what Clemo has called his "mystical-erotic search". This has found eventual fulfilment in his marriage to a wife whom he addresses thus in "Wedding Eve":

You chose pure heavenly grace
To mirror the image of your man:
No veiled carnality could pass
The test of that altar-glass;
But it showed you a face, my face,
Scarred, yet singing against earth's ban.

To plant the Cross in the nerves
Intensifies the wedlock sun;
Faith's ravaged fibre now revives
Where the blood thrives,
And I feel in your flushed curves,
In your kiss, the world-renouncing nun. . . .

The intensity of this does not lie easy on the imagination, and Clemo's poetry is often chillingly austere and not a little claustrophobic in its charting of the authentic life. There's a remorseless emphasis on the "striving flesh", the "storm-flash of grace", tunnelling through darkness, wrestling with the angel, not only in the personal poems but in the many that

[6] *Selected Poems*. By Jack Clemo. Bloodaxe, £6.95.

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recreate the lives of his heroes—Lawrence, Melville, Browning, Karl Barth—but if, as William Empson once said, the purpose of literature is to give us access to worlds of experience removed from our own, then Jack Clemo's *Selected Poems* must be considered a rare and unusually revealing book. It is certainly as compulsive as it is discomfiting, and it contains writing of undeniable splendour.

"A RELENTLESS AND probing critic of his own psyche" might be one way of describing Clemo, but it is, in fact, Roy Fuller on Thomas Blackburn. Blackburn died in 1977, and his *Collected Last Poems* have been gathered and edited by Jean MacVean who also contributes an informative introduction.[7] Once read, this introduction, which leads towards the extraordinary and moving circumstances of Blackburn's death, makes it easier to come to terms with the unpromising announcement of many of his clinical case-book titles: "Alcoholism", "Schizophrenia", "Maturation", "Insomnia", "Ageing", etc.

These are, in fact—though the spiritual quest is entirely different from Clemo's and could, for short-hand convenience, be described as Jungian—brave poems. They are often wordily abstract, circling the metaphors they are unable to grasp, but, particularly when recognising aspects of selfhood in the suffering of others, a reminder of the true, if uneven, poet that Thomas Blackburn was:

I remember on my last day in the asylum
On my way to the shop to buy cigarettes
Being accosted by one in madness continuum
And progressed in that shuffle they have and little leaps.

He gripped me by the throat and announced—
I remember still that grip and my spasm of fear—
"You're dead, you're dead, you're dead",
And then he let go of me and began to caper,

Singing, "I'm the only man in the world left alive",
Down the corridor he vanished singing,
In the extremis of that solitude lunatics have.

I bought my cigarettes and packed for leaving.

MORE THAN a reminder of Martin Bell is provided by the reissue, with a long introduction by Peter Porter, of his Collected Poems, along with a selection of what he wrote between 1967 and his death in 1978.[8] Bell was an influential founder member of The Group during the 1950s, but seemed to vanish as Porter, Peter Redgrove, Alan Brownjohn and others came to prominence. Despite his virtuosity, which drew high praise from Anthony Burgess, the admiration of his friends, an appearance in the Penguin Modern Poets series, and a copious knowledge and love of European literature, he seems to have remained far less read than spoken of.

Although his *Complete Poems* could have done without the rather bitter squibbery that his increasing disenchantment lapsed into, everyone should read the first part of the book in which Bell's sardonic relish for the tropes of anger is a match for Kingsley Amis and John Osborne at their early best. As Peter Porter observes, "his style is a yoking of salient detail to rhetorical projection", and his poems of celebration (of which "To Celebrate Eddie Cantor" is a fine example) demonstrate much of the surrealist-inspired energy he called on to counter the urban drabness, timidity, and cautious bourgeois respectability which he felt to be surrounding him:

Voice soaring in gleeful lubricity,
Scandalous coloratura at full tilt!
Excited wide eyes rolling
And hands that have to clap that joy's too much.
Energy, wanton small bright ball
Leaping on top of the fountain—
Living water, extravagant
Flooding and cleansing the movie-house.

No endless exits down the sad perspectives,
The avenues of infinite regrets,
For you, Sir, No Siree!
Palmy Days, ample a blue sky
And the gross bull lulled to an euphoric calm,

Byron and the Limits of Fiction
edited by BERNARD BEATTY and VINCENT NEWEY
This collection of articles aims to answer the fundamental questions of Byron's attitude to fiction and the limits inherent in this art form and in life itself. The book's purpose has been to assemble a collection of scholarly and informed articles round a particular theme, which, in this work, arises in two ways; firstly, as a manifest interest of Byron himself who was passionately concerned with the nature and status of fiction, yet often sceptical of its importance. Secondly, it is a major topic of current literary criticism which is concerned with fictions as completely autonomous structures. Byron's poetry can be seen as a version of these concerns, but also as one of the earliest deliberate challenges to them.
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Liverpool English Texts and Studies
312 pp., £18.25 net, Cloth, July 1988, 0 85323 026 9
LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY PRESS
PO Box 147, Liverpool, L69 3BX

[7] *The Adjacent Kingdom: Collected Last Poems*. By THOMAS BLACKBURN. Edited by JEAN MACVEAN. Peter Owen, £7.50.
[8] *Complete Poems*. By MARTIN BELL. Bloodaxe, £12.95, paper £7.95.

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Contented cows, O Don Sebastian—
The lineaments of gratified desire
Making whoopee with the whooping red-skins.

BELL'S ENCOURAGEMENT OF George Szirtes can now be seen not only in the context of a friendship—they met when Bell was Gregory Fellow at Leeds University and Szirtes was a student at the Art College—but, given his European outlook, a prescient liaison. If, while he has increasingly searched out and consolidated his Hungarian identity, Szirtes can be said—in Peter Porter's words—to have "taken England into Europe", one of the ways he has done so is by marrying his natural gift for surreal leaps of the imagination with a determined study of the English pentameter:

The writing on the wall says Carpe Dym
attached to the name of a national hero, or
it could well be the local football team.
Upstairs are voices I have heard before
that hook and draw you up as on a line,

to something cramped, imprisoned and defined
by yards and corridors. I run my hand
along the wall and feel it sweat and grind
its teeth. A brilliant light is in command,
a fist of light within an iron frame.

In his earlier work, Szirtes seemed to settle for the shorter lyric and essentially pictorial sequence, but he has been working towards the kind of extended meditation which has now found its form in the title poem of his new collection.[9] "Metro" is a solemn phantasmagoria, a Dantesque journey through the underground, set in fascist-controlled Hungary of 1944-45. Against a background music of what should never have happened but did, images of everyday living are glimpsed everywhere under threat.

"Metro" is at once domestic and chillingly universal. This double image is what gives it its power. Led through the nightmare of his family and nation's recent history, Szirtes asks the most difficult question of all concerning the implications of his own apparent freedom:

Disorientation, loss: the doors that close
Just when you think that you have gained your entrance.
A glimpse of hallway, hat-rack, mirror, more doors.
Beyond the doors and on the left perhaps
A window giving on to a neat yard
With trees and flowers. Straight ahead of you
A lift-cage dressed in iron broderie,
A smell of coffee brewing, an envelope
Slit like a wound, the darker recesses
Of sitting rooms, momentarily opened.
What troubles me is the uncertainty:
Is this really a valuable darkness,
Or am I part of the darkness that's locked out?

Gerda Mayer[10] came to England from Czechoslovakia in 1939 when she was eleven. What she brings to her art is the ability to recreate that blend of the knowing and the insouciant, a kind of wise-child irony which subverts what appears to present itself with all the friendly ease of anecdote. She is particularly good at building her beguiling shock-tactics into little songs like "Anon", which might almost be sung in one of George Szirtes' darker recesses:

I was resting my feet between two pogroms
And cooling them in a stream,
When through the tender leaves above
I saw an angel gleam.

My guardian angel: I knew him at once.
He floated about the tree.
Now carry me off and carry me high.
And he said presently.

And presently means by-and-by,
And by-and-by, anon.
He settled his halo and flapped his wings;
He kissed me and was gone.

PETER SCUPHAM'S wartime childhood is the subject of his outstanding new collection *The Air Show*.[11] Throughout it runs the image of his "Journeying Boy" who is, literally, travelling between Derby, Cambridgeshire, and Lincolnshire, changing homes and holidaying with his grandparents, but who also becomes the lost self for which the poet seeks:

Under my sandals
The shining parallels race on,
Haul our lost luggage into nowhere
Over cinders, torrents of oily stone;
Our stuffed compartments, weary cubicles,
Whistled dolorously downwind
Under the gantries of the blinded Midlands.

The first two lines are vivid but unexceptional nostalgia for a secure seat in the carriage, but then suddenly—with that "lost luggage" and its blank destination—you can hear the points change, and the journeying becomes the mysterious, haunted quest for identity which controls the enterprise.

Scupham has never written better. He catches so well the child's apprehension of adult anxiety. War Games are played on the nursery floor with intense concentration while the Air Show overhead turns from display into a puzzling cross-fire. Deliberate whimsy sets trap after trap, and some of Scupham's most memorable effects are rather as if the child he was is handing back to his adult self a crowded pop-up book to remind each other that there is still a war on:

They pushed their gravy trains into my tunnel
And stuffed me up with garden slugs and snails.
My salad days were crisp and limp as lettuce,
Then all the clockwork toppled off the rails,

[9] *Metro*. By GEORGE SZIRTES. Oxford University Press, £4.95.
[10] *A Heartache of Grass*. By GERDA MAYER. Peterloo Poets, £3.95.
[11] *The Air Show*. By PETER SCUPHAM. Oxford University Press, £4.95.

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The little foxes jumped from all the foxholes
And ran about the world with blazing tails.

Of the many books that have come my way over the past year since I last wrote a piece for ENCOUNTER, there is space to mention only a few more; but if anyone uses this kind of omnibus as a guide to what he or she should go out and buy, then each of them comes with the seal of strong approval.

Donald Davie's seriously witty investigation of what it means to be "god-fearing"—a God who is "steadily weighing/ your airy, your weightiest, saying"—makes a fascinating counter-balance to Jack Clemo about whom he has, elsewhere, written with great insight. Davie is an expert on the Dissenting tradition. He once described C. H. Sisson as "the devout Christian constantly battling his own instructed scepticism. *To Scorch or Freeze*[12] could be seen as presenting a devout sceptic battling, and attending to, Christian instruction.

MICHAEL DONAGHY's first collection, *Shibboleth*,[13] is a debut marked by fine and full tuning—the kind of attentiveness that notices how "the dive was there before the hawk was", and knows how to register it in a verse which is both sensuous and crisply intelligent:

Forget the here-and-now. We have no time
but this device of wantoness and wit.

Make me this present then: your hand in mine,
and we'll live out our lives in it.

Christopher Wiseman, British born but living in Canada since 1969, deserves to be far better known outside his adopted country. The poems in *Postcards Home*[14] appear to be written from "such an ordinary address" and to inherit the "calm unshaken/Handwriting" of the forebears a number of them pay homage to. They are mainly quiet and conversational, although they occasionally attempt a satirical vein which Wiseman doesn't quite have the nerve or conviction to force home. His postcards are, in fact, at their sharpest when they are most loving, and Wiseman's strengths are his conscientiously troubled sense of responsibility and an unsentimental gentleness:

Sirens. Gas masks. Bombers based nearby. A
searchlight battery.
And I in my uncle's study watching him work, waiting
for my life.
Such things have shaped me, catch me unaware, tease
my dreaming.
Now it's peacetime and I'm at war with myself, and I'm
undone
when I catch the smell of apples, of empty rooms, of
forked soil.
O uncle, my life, your old age. Sit at peace in your
pipesmoke.

Bernard O'Donoghue stood out as one of the best poets in Faber's *Poetry Introduction 6*, and *Poaching Rights*[15] is his welcome first collection. He has a sharp sense of the humour and incongruities of behaviour in small communities (there's something of the flavour of Synge's *Playboy* and that language "as fully flavoured as a nut or apple", but there's nothing archaic about his approach). O'Donoghue can be an up-to-the-minute ironist, too, and several of the poems achieve broad perspectives while remaining wittily exact in assembling the pieces of the jigsaw. "Pompeiana" is a good example:

Scratching away for shards of singed, green tile,
They'll be trying to assemble Sunday mornings
From our pre-atomic age. Infinitely
Careful, they'll fit them all together
To display medals and competition shields,
Serenaded by their much-loved pumproom trio,
And sell postcards of unoccupied bikinis.
Will they be able also to decode
The stern prohibition on petting and horseplay,
Or to account for that funny, male strutting
At large through the changing-rooms? To rebuild
That miserable, suggestive, chlorinated ache
From girls trailing toes in the blue water?

THE NEWLY-ESTABLISHED *Peterloo Preview* series[16] looks set to rival the Faber and Chatto Introductions. The first volume assembles six diverse talents, each of them worth watching in the future, and one of them—Brian Waltham—more than ready for a book of his own. Waltham's sardonic, disenchanted sense of absurdity, of opportunities missed, of being in the right place at the wrong, middle-aged time, is reminiscent of the later Louis MacNeice. The tone is one of edgy regret, a nervous, reflexive humour which refuses

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[12] *To Scorch or Freeze*. By DONALD DAVIE. Carcanet, £6.95.
[13] *Shibboleth*. By MICHAEL DONAGHY. Oxford University Press, £5.95.
[14] *Postcards Home: Poems New & Selected*. By CHRISTOPHER WISEMAN. Sono Nis Press (1745 Blanshard Street, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 2J8), $9.95 Canadian.
[15] *Poaching Rights*. By BERNARD O'DONOGHUE. Gallery Books, £6.60, paper £3.60.
[16] *Peterloo Preview I*. Edited by HARRY CHAMBERS. Peterloo Poets, £4.95.

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to become mellow. Even his "Maison de Vacance" is not quite the good place one feels it wants to be:

Doors with a grudge, a book open where it was left,
Last year's woodsmoke, another fall of plaster,
A damp patch, shutters that will not budge;
House, you're in a sulk like a neglected girl.

Come, we'll light a fire, such a fire,
And you shall show me your winter trophies;
Fly husks in shabby webs, a shrivelled mouse,
Moths and wasps in their window graveyard.

This is Peterloo's 100th volume, and it is typical of Harry Chambers's commitment to new talent that the press's century should be scored by a new team. Waltham is the senior member. The others are Donna Dickenson, good on childhood and quirky recollection; Stephan Duncan, who writes about love and the birth of his son without provoking that rather too recognisable response "'tis new to thee"; Tony Roberts, a dogged explorer of myth and history; the mercurial Raymond Tallis whose "In Memoriam Roland Barthes" is the volume's bravura performance; and Maureen Wilkinson, who won the 1987 Peterloo Open Poetry Competition with "Bringing the Night Cow Down" and now proves that she has a body of work of equal quality. This is a volume that gives real pleasure. It could serve, not least for the reluctant reader, as a most approachable introduction to the middle ground of contemporary poetry.

[17] *Available Light*. By MARGE PIERCY. Pandora, £6.95.

And, last, for a book that talks a dozen to the dime, full of engaging personality and taking its material from whatever comes to hand. Marge Piercy's *Available Light*[17] is readily available and shed around on topics as diverse as housework, apartheid, menstruating in a traffic jam, and the effects of radiation. She has no time for emotional restraint, and clearly identifies with "the driven" of her poem "The Fecund complain they are not honoured":

The driven get ideas in the bathtub
and sit down still dripping and spoil
the chair. The driven get a great idea
at the worst moment, panting and heaving
and blow the orgasm or lose their erection
as the case may be. They burn the beans,
disconnect the phone, are rude to callers,
and yet in the middle of the down-filled

night, the muse walks back and forth
across their belly in boots with cleats
cursing and kicking and singing the praises
of the unborn poems and the untold stories
till they swarm like fish babies nipping
the flanks of sleep. When the driven die
their real inner stone reads: you did
a little piece of it, a little piece.

Marge Piercy not only burns the beans, she spills them. She also most certainly eliminates the negative, and is not to be found messing with Mister In-Between.

Quixote Meets Pinfold

George Orwell & Evelyn Waugh—By ROBERT MURRAY DAVIS

REVISIONIST BIOGRAPHERS have modified the views of George Orwell as a secular saint and Evelyn Waugh as a reactionary monster composed of equal parts of wit and rudeness. But these impressions persist, and many people see the two not merely in separate categories but in separate universes. Even Malcolm Muggeridge, who induced Waugh to visit Orwell in hospital, recorded only the physical comedy of the lanky Orwell and the chunky Waugh—dressed, respectively, down and up like working man and squire from back issues of *Punch*.[1] While this is an amusing scene, it obscures the fact that they shared and continued intellectual and literary traditions which served to bring them together on friendly terms and, more important, to put them on the same side in major disputes about literature and language in the mid-1940s.

In the 1930s, Waugh and Orwell had few tastes in common, but they disliked some of the same people for some of the same reasons. They were especially and similarly harsh in their detailed judgment of the Auden-Spender-MacNeice-Day Lewis circle. Both thought individual members overrated, and perhaps (since they themselves were outside any discernible literary coterie) resented the group which had, in Waugh's terms, "ganged up and captured the decade".[2]

[1] Malcolm Muggeridge, in *The World of George Orwell*, ed. Miriam Gross (1971), p. 173.
[2] Evelyn Waugh, "Two Unquiet Lives", *The Tablet*, 5 May 1951, reprinted in *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Donat S. Gallagher (Penguin ed.), p. 394.

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However, both Orwell and Waugh opposed these writers less because of their success than because of the authoritarian mentality which both saw as characteristic of the many former schoolmasters among them. More important, both believed that ideology was dangerous to the writer. Both took issue with Edward Upward's dictum that ". . . no book written *at the present time* can be 'good' unless it is written from a Marxist or near-Marxist view".[3] Waugh flatly contradicted him: ". . . no artist, certainly no writer, can be a genuine Marxist, for a writer's material must be the individual soul (which is the preconception of Christendom), while the Marxist can only think in classes and categories, and even in classes abhors variety".[4] Orwell would have denied that there was any real distinction between converts to Communism and to Christianity, and he would have argued that both ideologies were equally damaging to the writer because the "autonomous individual" was the source of the "literature of liberalism". He insisted that the writer "*as a writer* . . . is a liberal".[5]

The direction of these comments—no writer can be a Marxist; every writer must be a liberal—reflects Waugh's and Orwell's essentially contradictory views of the value of individualism. Both were attracted to anarchism. Orwell admired the Anarchists of Catalonia as exponents of a real classless society and as essentially humanistic, though he did not put it in quite this way. Waugh had a taste for anarchy, which he never defined and only indirectly described. He seemed to regard it as essentially negative and destructive—and none the worse for that. He praised the stories of Arthur Calder-Marshall as anarchistic rather than Marxist, because

> ". . . the disillusioned Marxist becomes a Fascist; the disillusioned anarchist, a Christian. A robust discontent, whether it be with joint stock banking or the World, Flesh and Devil, is good for a writer . . . ."[6]

BOTH MEN knew and liked Cyril Connolly, but they would have agreed that his discontent was not robust enough; and they came to regard him as embodying the more objectionable features of the literary Left. Waugh accused Connolly of ignoring the world of real men (I use the gender consciously) where actual work is done and which could be discerned in "a middle class that is uniquely apt for strenuous physical adventures, amenable to discipline, bursting with *esprit de corps*, and a great fund of patriotism which has escaped serious indignation for some time because it has been combined with incurious self-confidence." "Escape from the café chatter", he advised. Connolly should "meet some of the people, whom he now fears as traitors, who are engaged in the practical work of government and think out for himself what Fascism means".[7]

The sonorous and Latinate diction is peculiar to Waugh: the sentiments are very similar to Orwell's. Orwell was less sanguine about the middle and upper classes, but he did see in the example of Connolly and his peers that "'Cultured' middle-class life has reached a depth of softness at which a public-school education—five years in a lukewarm bath of snobbery—can actually be looked back upon as an eventful period". No wonder, he concluded, "that the huge tribe known as 'the right left people' found it so easy to condone the purge-and-OGPU side of the Russian régime and the horrors of the first five-year plan—they were so gloriously incapable of understanding what it all meant".[8]

ANOTHER PROBLEM with the literary Left, both Waugh and Orwell thought, was that it was not very manly. Orwell denigrated the "pansy-left"[9] in order to establish, by contrast, Kipling's admirable sense of responsibility; Waugh noted Connolly's "preference for the epicene" and analysed his literary politics in sexual terms:

> "Female authors like to live in jolly intimacy with their fellows; they rejoice in literary luncheons, publishers' teas and 'getting up' books together as if they were charades;

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[3] George Orwell, "Inside the Whale", *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* (1940), reprinted in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (4 vols Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), vol. I, p. 522.
[4] Evelyn Waugh, "Art from Anarchy", *Night and Day*, 16 September 1937; *Essays*, p. 206.
[5] George Orwell, "Inside the Whale", *Collected Essays*, vol I, p. 525.
[6] Evelyn Waugh, "Art from Anarchy", *Essays*, p. 206.
[7] Evelyn Waugh, "Present Discontents", *The Tablet*, 3 December 1938; *Essays*, p. 241.
[8] George Orwell, "Inside the Whale"; *Collected Essays*, vol. I, p. 517.
[9] George Orwell, "Rudyard Kipling", *Horizon*, February 1942; *Collected Essays*, vol. II, p. 184.

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male authors like to do their work in solitude and take their pleasure in the company that will distract them least from their serious business; but epicene authors like to huddle together and imagine plots and betrayals."[10]

When the War began, Waugh and Orwell were even less patient with such self-indulgence. In *Put Out More Flags* (1942, but set in the winter of 1939-1940), Waugh's Ambrose Silk, archetypal "pansy-left", is listening to a circle of younger communists circling and sniffing the political and literary problems brought on by the War. He muses:

"If I were part of a herd, one of these people, normal and responsible for the welfare of my herd, Gawd strike me pink, thought Ambrose, I wouldn't sit around discussing what kind of war it was going to be. I'd make it my kind of war. I'd set about killing and stampeding the other herd as fast and as hard as I could."

Orwell was a little bothered at the anti-Semitic strain of *Put Out More Flags*, but he did not disapprove of its "counter-attack against the rather shallow Leftism which was fashionable in the previous decade and which was exemplified by such organisations as the Left Book Club":

"During the past twenty-five years the activities of what are called 'intellectuals' have been largely mischievous. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that if the 'intellectuals' had done their work a little more thoroughly, Britain would have surrendered in 1940."[11]

Neither Waugh nor Orwell had any intention of surrendering. Orwell was wounded in Spain; Waugh fought in North Africa and Crete: both sought more action than they were offered. Orwell argued, in the face of some Leftists who believed that the upper classes were conscious or unconscious Fascists, that

"One thing that has always shown that the English ruling class are *morally* fairly sound, is that in time of war they are ready enough to get themselves killed . . . . What is to be expected of them is not treachery or physical cowardice, but stupidity, unconscious sabotage, an infallible instinct for doing the wrong thing. They are not wicked, or not altogether wicked; they are merely unteachable."[12]

At least the first half of this quotation can be applied to Waugh's Alastair Trumpington in *Put Out More Flags* and to Guy Crouchback in the *Sword of Honour* trilogy. The second half could be applied to many officers in those novels. But while Waugh's initial romantic view of the Army, or at least of an élite regiment, is widely known, fewer readers are aware of Orwell's strong interest in details of military dress and his question, when told that Waugh was serving in the Commandos, "Why can't someone on the Left ever do something like that?"[13] Writing of Malcolm Muggeridge's enlistment, he pointed out that this was something "that none of the ex-warmongers of the Left has done". "Even at its stupidest and most sentimental", patriotism was "a comelier thing than the shallow self-righteousness of the left-wing intelligentsia."[14]

FROM THE MID-1940s until Orwell's death, it is possible to compare his ideas about society, language, and literature even more closely with Waugh's because on several occasions they reviewed the same books: Cyril Connolly's *The Unquiet Grave*, Harold Laski's *Faith, Reason and Civilization*, and Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*.

Both attacked Connolly because he had not enough individuality to define himself. Orwell saw *The Unquiet Grave* as symptomatic of Connolly's "inferiority complex resulting from a private income" and his clinging to "the sinking ship of individualism" while fully aware that it was sinking. Orwell was less interested in the book as a book than in arguing that it was possible to "defy the insect-men with a good conscience" and thus to assert individuality—though he admitted that this was difficult for anyone with unearned income.[15] As *Animal Farm* was soon to demonstrate, Orwell was hoping for the advent of real, humane socialism, and his review reflected that hope.

Waugh, on the other hand, had rejected political or any other involvement with the modern world to polish his style and return to cultivating the garden at Piers Court, neglected for six years. Accordingly, his review treated *The Unquiet Grave* not as symptom but as a potential work of literature. A professional author, he was dismayed that "a great deal of valuable matter has here been prematurely put in the killing-bottle and pinned on the setting-board". He saw, as he had seen in *Enemies of Promise*, that Connolly had not achieved a unified structure—and, in this case, not even a single narrative voice. Like Orwell, he argued that Connolly, in pursuit of individualism, had failed to make himself individual because "He has been duped and distracted by the chatter of psychoanalysts and socialists. His motto should have been "Do not speak to the man at the wheel".[16] Waugh's criticism is as literary as Orwell's is political.

At first glance, this distinction seems also to apply to their conceptions of language. Both were considerable stylists; both sought lucidity and demanded it in others; but they had different ideas of where good writing came from, what it was, and what it was for.

For example, both argued that the best writing was closely related to speech—but the speech they valued was that of two very different classes. Convinced "that concrete words are better than abstract ones, and that the shortest way of saying anything is always the best", Orwell believed that "The people likeliest to use simple concrete language, and to

[10] Evelyn Waugh, "Present Discontents"; *Essays*, p. 240.
[11] George Orwell, "Antisemitism in Britain", *Contemporary Jewish Record*, April 1945; *Collected Essays*, vol. III, p. 339.
[12] George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (Secker & Warburg, 1941); *Collected Essays*, vol. II, p. 72-73.
[13] Anthony Powell, *Infants of the Spring* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), pp. 93-94, 99.
[14] George Orwell, "The Limit to Pessimism", *New English Weekly*, 25 April 1940; *Collected Essays*, vol. I, p. 535.
[15] George Orwell, *The Observer*, 14 January 1945; *Collected Essays*, vol. III, pp. 319-20.
[16] Evelyn Waugh, "A Pilot All at Sea", *The Tablet*, 10 November 1945; *Essays*, p. 282.

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think of metaphors that really call up a visual image, are those who are in contact with physical reality." It followed that "language, at any rate the English language, suffers when the educated classes lose touch with the manual workers" and that, ideally, "Language ought to be the joint creation of poets and manual workers".[17]

Within a year, Waugh maintained, on the contrary, that language was dying

> ". . . from the decay of stratified society . . . . Only a continuous tradition of gentle speech, with all its implications—the avoidance of boredom and vulgarity, the exchange of complicated ideas, the observance of subtle nuances of word and phrase—can preserve the written tongue from death, and lifelong habitude to such speech alone schools a man to write his own tongue."

He deprecated "writers who in their formative years learned the uncouth tongue of the pit and the factory and later, with effort, amassed a wider vocabulary of words they knew only from books",[18] and some years thereafter pointed to the decline of Latin as explaining the stylistic vagaries of women, Protestants, and Americans.

For Orwell, "Good prose is like a window pane"; for Waugh, "the necessary elements of style are lucidity, elegance, individuality; these three qualities combine to form a preservative which ensures the nearest approximation to permanence in the fugitive art of letters". The Anglo-Saxon/Latinate contrast is obvious—although in certain moods, Orwell recognised the writer's, and presumably the reader's, "pleasure in the impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story".[19]

Both Orwell and Waugh, moreover, agreed on the need for lucidity. Neither thought highly of Harold Laski, Waugh because he was a Communist, Orwell because he was a Stalinist—but both because he was an execrable writer. A direct comparison of their reviews of Laski's *Faith, Reason and Civilization* is impossible: the *Manchester Evening News* (published by *The Manchester Guardian*) refused to print Orwell's—because, he suspected, it pinpointed Laski's refusal to recognise dictatorial elements in Stalin's régime. Orwell wrote to Dwight MacDonald that he had gone "about as far as was consistent with ordinary honesty *not* to say what pernicious tripe the book is". MacDonald testifies that Orwell demolished "Laski's phony analogy of Stalin's Russia with the early Christian church" but gives no further details.[20]

[17] George Orwell, "The English People", *Britain in Pictures* series (Collins, 1947; written 1944); *Collected Essays*, vol. III, pp. 27, 29.

[18] Evelyn Waugh, "The Writing of English", *The Tablet*, 3 July 1943; *Essays*, p. 276.

[19] George Orwell, "Why I Write", *Gangrel*, Summer 1946; *Collected Essays*, vol. I, p. 7. Evelyn Waugh, "Literary Style in England and America", *Books on Trial*, October 1955; *Essays*, p. 478.

[20] Dwight MacDonald, note to letter to Philip Rahv, 1 May 1944 in George Orwell, *Collected Essays*, vol. III, pp. 141-42, n.

THE NATIONAL INTEREST

In our Spring Issue:

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Elsewhere, Orwell did comment on Laski's style, or lack of it. Against Laski's charge that T. S. Eliot wrote "only for the few", he replied that some of Eliot's lines "are about as near to spoken English as print can come". A sentence from one of Laski's speeches—". . . one must assume that Professor Laski actually stood up on a platform and spouted it forth, parenthesis and all"—showed that he had "simply forgotten what everyday language is like". "The louder people yap about the proletariat", he added, "the more they despise its language."[21]

In "Politics and the English Language" Orwell examines a passage from another Laski essay, and finds

> ". . . five negatives in 53 words. One of these is superfluous, making nonsense of the whole passage and in addition there is the slip of *alien* for akin, making further nonsense, and several avoidable pieces of clumsiness which increase the general vagueness."[22]

Waugh usually saved such detailed attention for writers like Thomas Merton whose message he wished to make clearer and more convincing; but he did call *Faith, Reason and Civilization* "a deplorably shoddy piece of work . . . diffuse, repetitive and contradictory", by a man "so set on preaching the dignity of labour that he shirks his own work". Abhorrent though it was, he could not resist translating one passage for readers of *The Tablet*:

> "'What is not seriously open to a scholar to deny is that there is no more ground for accepting the validity of the postulates upon which the Churches build their rights than there is for accepting those of Mohammedanism and Buddhism.' Shake off the superfluous negatives, translate his horrible jargon into English, and read, 'Scholars have conclusively proved that the claims of Christianity are as false as those of Mohammedanism and Buddhism'."

Waugh was more interested in trying to outline Laski's argument and drawing from its comparison between Christianity and Marxism his own conclusion that

> ". . . the latest imposture is more grossly impudent than its predecessor, Christianity, for the latter said, 'Ye will be happy hereafter', and cannot be proved wrong (until Professor Laski's scholars get to work) while the former says, 'My dear comrades, you may not realise it, but you *are* happy at this moment'; that Marxism is the new opium of the people . . . ."[23]

This could almost be *Animal Farm*, except that Laski has none of Snowball's or the other pigs' aphoristic talents.

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[21] George Orwell, "Propaganda and Demotic Speech", *Persuasion*, Summer 1944; *Collected Essays*, vol. III, p. 137.

[22] George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language", *Horizon*, April 1946; *Collected Essays*, vol. IV, pp. 134-35.

[23] Evelyn Waugh, "Marxism, the Opiate of the People", *The Tablet*, 22 April 1944; *Essays*, pp. 277-80.

[24] George Orwell, *The New Yorker*, 17 July 1948; *Collected Essays*, vol. IV, pp. 441-42.

[25] George Orwell, Letter to Julian Symons, 10 July 1948; *Collected Essays*, vol. IV, p. 438.

WAUGH'S AND ORWELL'S REACTIONS to Graham Greene are less easy to categorise, not only because Greene is a greater writer but also because Waugh and Orwell were well disposed to him and his work. Orwell thought him a socialist at heart; Waugh regarded him as an ally in Catholic letters. But they expressed similar reservations about *The Heart of the Matter*, the last book they both reviewed.

Orwell, who had asked Anthony Powell to prepare Greene for his unfavourable review, attacked the implication that, for Greene and some of his co-religionists, "Hell is a sort of high-class night club, entry to which is reserved for Catholics only". He objected still more to the plot (which he found ridiculous), and to Scobie's character:

> ". . . the two halves of him do not fit together. If he were capable of getting into the kind of mess that is described, he would have got into it years earlier. If he really felt that adultery was mortal sin, he would stop committing it; if he persisted in it, his sense of sin would weaken. If he believed in Hell, he would not risk going there merely to spare the feelings of a couple of neurotic women. And one might add that if he were the kind of man we are told he is—that is, a man whose chief characteristic is a horror of causing pain—he would not be an officer in a colonial police force."

The weaknesses in the novel, Orwell thought, were the result of Greene's "foisting theological preoccupations upon simple people", so that the book "gives the impression of having been mechanically constructed, the familiar conflict being set out, like an algebraic equation, with no attempt at psychological probability." Orwell did not object to more subtle renderings of the theme, as in *The Power and the Glory* or in Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, where "the situation is itself a normal one. The Catholic characters bump up against problems they would meet with in real life; they do not suddenly move on to a different intellectual plane as soon as their religious beliefs are involved."[24]

WAUGH, by contrast, considered it entirely natural for simple people to be concerned with theology. Unlike Orwell, he commended Greene's consciously non-literary style and masterful technique. But Scobie bothered him too; and he spent a third of his long review examining possible distinctions between Scobie's moral and spiritual states. Unfortunately, Waugh did little to clarify the distinction, but he seemed to be saying that Scobie's motives were pride and self-interest (concealed even from himself) rather than the love of God. Instead of passing over the book's epigraph from Charles Péguy, as Orwell had done (elsewhere Orwell confessed that Péguy "made me feel rather unwell"[25]), Waugh analysed not only the epigraph but the context from which it was taken, and considered Péguy's religious biography before dismissing the words as very nearly nonsense. In a passage with which Orwell might have sympathised, Waugh wondered

> ". . . whether nowadays logical rule-of-thumb Catholics are not a little too humble towards the mystics . . . . We may well fight shy of ecstatic states of prayer, with which we

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> have no acquaintance, but sacrilege and suicide are acts of which we are perfectly capable. To me the idea of willing my own damnation for the love of God is either a very loose poetical expression or a mad blasphemy, for the God who accepted that sacrifice could be neither just nor lovable."[26]

Waugh is not as impressed as Orwell by "ordinary human decency", but he would prefer some common sense and common experience to be applied to Catholic doctrine.[27]

When Waugh and Orwell considered each other's work, their reactions were surprisingly favourable. Each asserted that the other wrote as well as one could, respectively with and without faith in Christianity. Apparently Waugh first met Orwell's work when "my Communist cousin Claud [Cockburn] . . . warned me against Trotskyist literature, so that I read and greatly enjoyed Orwell's *Animal Farm*."[28] Orwell had sent him a copy—a very generous act, considering the paper shortage, the scarcity of copies, and their widely different political views—and Waugh thanked him for "your ingenious and delightful allegory". Seven months later, he reviewed Orwell's *Critical Essays* for *The Tablet*; and in 1948 he wrote to tell Orwell about P. G. Wodehouse's *The Swoop*, in case Orwell thought of revising "In Defence of P. G. Wodehouse". By July 1949, they were on close enough terms for Waugh to address his letter"Dear Orwell—Blair?—which do you prefer?" and offer frank and detailed criticism of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. After Orwell's death, Waugh quoted his views on Wodehouse and on Kipling.

Orwell's post-War comments on Waugh were confined to a review of *Scott-King's Modern Europe* for *The New York Times Book Review* in 1949, and to letters and notes written while he was preparing an essay on Waugh, never finished, which had been commissioned by *Partisan Review*.

Each found much to praise in the other. Waugh believed that Orwell's essays expressed "at its best the new humanism of the common man"; and while he preferred "the hierarchic principle" to the study of "popular culture", he was delighted to learn something new from the essay on Dickens, and saw "The Art of Donald McGill" ("the masterpiece of the book") and "Raffles and Miss Blandish" as examples of "the method in which the new school is supreme". Although he regretted Orwell's "lapses into the barrack-room slang of the class war" and thought it a mistake "to desert the *lingua franca* of polite letters for the jargon of a côterie", he found Orwell "as readable as his thought is lucid", and assured the more sensitive readers of *The Tablet* that Orwell's use of "coarse language" was not "inconsistent with high moral principles".[29]

In preferring *Brideshead Revisited* to *The Heart of the Matter*, Orwell dissented from most of his contemporaries. Preparing his unfinished essay on Waugh, he read extensively, not omitting early and minor works. He thought *Rossetti*, Waugh's first book, "quite good", and he mentioned without fulminating against it *Robbery Under Law*—financed by a capitalist, thoroughly conservative, and repudiated or at least not reprinted by its author.[30] In the fragmentary notes for his essay, he noted "The advantages of not being part of the movement, irrespective of whether the movement is in the right direction or not", and selected for praise some of the elements in *Brideshead*:

> "Studiously detached attitude. Not puritanical. Priests not superhuman. Real theme—Sebastian's drunkenness, & family's unwillingness to cure this at the expense of committing a sin. Note that this is a real departure from the humanist attitude, with which no compromise possible."

Orwell could not compromise, and he went on to say of Lord Marchmain's death scene that "one cannot really be a Catholic & grown-up".[31] Nor could he quite accept Waugh's politics. In reviewing *Scott-King*, he argued that the central character's, and perhaps Waugh's, refusal "to differentiate between one version of progress and another" led to "a diehard, know-nothing attitude that has helped to bring about the very conditions which Mr Waugh is satirising". Orwell's point was as much literary as ideological:

> "One can accept Scott-King's estimate of the modern world, and perhaps even agree with him that a classical education is the best prophylactic against insanity, and yet still feel that he could fight the modern world more effectively if he would occasionally turn aside to read a sixpenny pamphlet on Marxism."[32]

WAUGH FOR HIS PART regretted the fact that, while Orwell "has an unusually high moral sense and respect for justice and truth . . . he seems never to have been touched at any point by a conception of religious thought and life". As a result, "He frequently brings his argument to the point when having, with great acuteness, seen the falsity and internal contradiction of the humanist view of life, there seems no alternative but the acceptance of a revealed religion, and then stops short."[33]

Writing to Orwell about *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he recalled this point and added that he thought Orwell's "metaphysics wrong" in denying the existence of the soul, because he could then "only contrast matter with reason & will. It is now apparent that matter can control reason and will in certain conditions. So you are left with nothing but matter." However, the impasse to which Winston Smith, at least, had come was in Waugh's terms escapable:

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[26] Evelyn Waugh, "Felix Culpa?" *Commonweal*, 16 July 1948; *Essays*, pp. 364-65.

[27] Greene later asserted that he did not intend Scobie to be regarded as a saint, but "to show that pity can be the expression of almost monstrous pride" and that "Suicide was Scobie's inevitable end." *Ways of Escape* (Simon & Schuster, 1980), pp. 125, 126.

[28] Entry of 31 August 1945, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Michael Davie (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976), p. 633.

[29] Evelyn Waugh, "A New Humanism", *The Tablet*, 6 April 1946; *Essays*, pp. 306-307.

[30] George Orwell, Letters to Michael Meyer, 12 March 1949, and Richard Rees, 3 March 1949, *Collected Essays*, vol. IV, pp. 481, 478.

[31] George Orwell, Undated notebook entry, before 21 March 1949; *Collected Essays*, vol. IV, pp. 512-13.

[32] George Orwell, *The New York Times Book Review*, 29 February 1949, pp. 1, 25.

[33] Evelyn Waugh, "A New Humanism", *Essays*, p. 307.

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> "The Brotherhood which can confound the Party is one of love—not adultery in Berkshire, still less throwing vitriol in children's faces. And men who love a crucified God need never think of torture as all-powerful."[34]

There is no evidence that either took amiss the other's desire to educate him. Both were able to recognise and accept the gulf between the humanist and the religious views of life, as they were apparently able to accept the gulf between their theories of language and society. Perhaps disliking the same things is more important. Orwell hated "big towns, noise, motor cars, the radio, tinned food, central heating and 'modern' furniture".[35] Waugh would have seconded all that, and added (in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, 1957) his own abominations—"plastics, Picasso, sunbathing, and jazz".

But they had other things in common than their dislikes. Both loved to work with their hands, especially at carpentry; and similar motives, if dissimilar tastes, spurred Waugh's manual labour on the improvements at Piers Court and Orwell's at his various cottages and farms. They agreed about aspects of literature. Neither cared for the novels of Charles Williams, preferring the technical proficiency of Somerset Maugham; both, pushed to the choice, preferred Kipling to Wilde; both defended P. G. Wodehouse against accusations of treason; both enjoyed Osbert Sitwell's enjoyment of the plush Edwardian world. Characteristically, Orwell defended his own responsiveness by attacking

> ". . . a widespread idea that nostalgic feelings about the past are inherently vicious. One ought, apparently, to live in a continuous present, a minute-to-minute cancellation of memory, and if one thinks of the past at all it should merely be in order to thank God that we are so much better than we used to be. This seems to me a sort of intellectual face-lifting, the motive behind which is a snobbish terror of growing old. One ought to realise that a human being cannot continue developing indefinitely, and that a writer, in particular, is throwing away his heritage if he repudiates the experience of his early life . . . . The great thing is to be your age, which includes being honest about your social origins."[36]

Both men have been accused of denying those origins, and it is true that they worked very hard to create the caricatures of socialist Quixote and proto-reactionary Pinfold, past which it is now quite difficult to see. In some respects, Waugh was more liberal and Orwell more conservative than their reputations would allow. Both in their different ways resisted the social structure and the language of post-totalitarian Europe; and their resistance was rooted in nostalgia for the richer and more complex anomalies of the pre-modern period. Each, finally, rejected the religion of his fathers for a quite different creed; but it may be significant that Orwell had a Church of England burial, and that Waugh's Requiem Mass ended not with a Roman Catholic hymn but with *Oh God, our help in ages past*.

[34] Letter dated 17 July 1949, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Mark Amory (Pengin ed.), p. 302.

[35] George Orwell, in *Twentieth Century Authors*, eds Kunitz and Haycraft (H. W. Wilson and Company, 1942), written 17 April 1940; *Collected Essays*, vol. II, p. 24.

[36] George Orwell, *The Adelphi*, July-September 1948; *Collected Essays*, vol. IV, pp. 445-46.

Worlds in Focus

Recent Short Stories—By ANTHONY GARDNER

IT SEEMS extraordinary that the term "short story" should ever have gained acceptance as the name of a huge literary genre. True, from one point of view it is admirably straightforward, a description which is instantly comprehensible to anybody; as a definition, however, it is hopelessly inadequate. What constitutes "short"? When does a short story become a novella? Doesn't the word "story" put undue emphasis on plot as opposed to characterisation? Worst of all, there is the suspicion that to classify a work of literature—however vaguely—according to the number of pages it covers is in its way as philistine as filling one's library with finely bound books bought by the yard.

Yet the question of length is in some respects crucial, for the importance that an idea assumes in a writer's mind—and the consequent amount of space he allots to it on paper—is something that defies explanation. An image occurs to him, say of a man wandering in the desert without realising that he is within easy reach of an oasis. He might use this image as a simile in a poem; he might choose it as the subject of a short story; he might construct an epic novel around it: instinct alone can tell him how far to go. In the introduction to their anthology *Best Short Stories 1988*,[1] the editors Giles Gordon and David Hughes tell us that "These stories are chosen because their length is exactly right, even if you long to explore further the worlds they conjure up"; and it is not a bad criterion, though it is impossible to agree that all the stories in the collection meet it (Adam Mars-Jones's *Remission*, for instance, is too diffuse to succeed fully as a short story, though it is easy to imagine it incorporated in a novel).

[1] *Best Short Stories 1988*. Edited by GILES GORDON and DAVID HUGHES. Heinemann, £12.95.

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The title of this anthology (now an annual publication) has been criticised before, but in attempting to justify it, Gordon and Hughes make some questionable remarks:

> "The definition of best is simple enough, because so entirely subjective. It is what we as readers liked most without having to say why . . . Both of us in our separate searches have looked for certitude of vision, no matter how expressed. Even a writer imprisoned in verbal platitude or besotted by an excess of felicity belongs forgivably to the best if he or she unlocks feeling."

It is on these grounds, then, that a story like Richard Crawford's *Autumn Rain* was selected: a graphic tale of IRA knee-capping, the nausea it "unlocks" and (presumably) the originality of its subject matter are deemed to outweigh its lapses into cliché. Jim Clarke's *The Death of the Tribe* has similar strengths and weaknesses (imaginatively set in early Christian Ireland, it is hampered by verbal infelicities and a less than convincing ending), but as the work of a sixteen-year-old it is of enough interest to deserve a place in any anthology which made less extravagant claims for itself. Let us hope that next year the editors drop the dubious superlative, if only as a favour to the unknowns whom they are brave enough to include alongside established writers like William Trevor, Nadine Gordimer and Salman Rushdie.

One of the most pleasant surprises in this collection is Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Despite the acclaim given to his screen play for *My Beautiful Laundrette*, it is clear from Kureishi's other work for theatre and cinema—above all from the dire *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*—that he has a great deal to learn as a dramatist. His work is characterised by a love of melodrama and sermonising, coupled to pretentious and unconvincing dialogue (of the "If Leonardo da Vinci had been alive today, he'd have lived in an inner city" variety), which invariably does a great disservice to the many anti-Establishment causes he espouses: one cannot help feeling that if he were to write a play in praise of leeks, he would have diehard vegans queuing in McDonalds. But in *The Buddha of Suburbia*—a lively, idiosyncratic tale of an Indian teenager in '60s London, whose father is adopted as a makeshift guru by nirvana-seeking white neighbours—he shows what he is really capable of. Rant and pretension have been sluiced away, and what remains is the author's gift for gentle humour, satirising narrator, father and neighbours alike.

> "Cheryl turned to my father and waved her arm at him.
> 'My good and deep friend Haroon here, he will show us the way. The Path.'
> 'Oh Christ', I whispered to Paul, thinking how my father couldn't even find his way to Beckenham. 'Christ Almighty.'"

It will be fascinating to see whether Kureishi manages to show equal restraint in his forthcoming first novel.

Some subjects are peculiarly well-suited to the short-story form: revenge (represented here in Georgina Hammick's *High Teas*) is one, creating as it does a symmetry which is more clearly perceivable in a small-scale work; the supernatural is another, since a ghost story enslaves the imagination most effectively when it is read at one sitting, without interruption from the outside world. But so too is dreariness, as William Trevor's contribution to this collection, *A Trinity*, demonstrates. The trinity in question consists of a timid, accident-prone couple and the old man they call Uncle, whose house they share and whose money they hope to inherit. The couple set off on holiday to Venice, but when they end up in Interlaken by mistake, their time there is ruined by the prospect of Uncle's ridicule. The pinched, parochial nature of their lives is skilfully evoked in this sternly moral tale, but its 7,000 words are as much as one could bear on the subject of Dawne and Keith. Sophie Frank's *Birth* is another, more intense example of this, describing in short, hammer-blow sentences the pairing of a mother with the wrong child at a hospital. The most mundane events are invested with terror ("Horns don't honk. They don't wail. They don't scream. No one can describe the hell of an echoing, ceaseless car horn."), and the cumulative effect of the writing is dizzying.

RONALD FRAME'S *Fruits de Mer* is another especially accomplished story. To some extent it is a miniature version of the author's last novel, *Sandmouth People*, which followed the lives of a town's inhabitants through a single day. The setting is a seafood restaurant, through which the reader is taken, table by table, to observe the various people lunching there: a party of businessmen, a divorced couple, a girl and her step-mother. . . . The procedure is a classic one: what makes it interesting is not only the deftness of Frame's character sketches, but the way in which he questions the accuracy of our perceptions. At one moment he is omniscient about the clientèle, at another he is merely making "an inspired guess". Our understanding of others and ourselves, he suggests, is blurred by our exposure to the magazine articles and films which encourage us to act and imitate our way through life: "this is the Modern Age, the second half of the 1980s, and in the mind's eye an imaginary metaphorical camera lens trails us everywhere. . . ." At the end we come upon the author himself, sitting alone in a corner and asking the question: "what certain knowledge do I have about myself?"

Interestingly, the shortest story in the anthology—Jim Mangnall's *Vigil*—is also the best. Mangnall first made his name as a poet, and from the opening paragraph his prose casts a deep lyrical spell:

> "I was shown, for a moment, into a room in deep shadow and vaguely realised that two children were asleep there. Their faces were serene but beneath the long white coverlet a small foot twitched in a dream. Outside, a bird came to the window sill, its wings swishing suddenly out of the grey sky, and the new year began as I tiptoed out, leaving them under their quilt of snow, smiling at their dreams."

This is the verbal equivalent of an impossibly gentle surrealist painting, in which the bird acts as a mysterious agent to dissolve the boundaries between the children's dream and the narrator's reality, the bedroom and the outside world, the old year and the new. The rest of the story follows the narrator's

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attempts to place the incident—to remember the year in which it took place and the identity of the children—unrolling his own progress into old age as he does so, and reaching an unforeseen and moving conclusion. There are echoes of T. S. Eliot (*Four Quartets* and *Gerontion* in particular come to mind), but it is impossible not to think of Proust, too: a more extreme example of how two imaginations can differ in their perception of the "right" length for a subject would be hard to find.

THERE ARE SEVERAL other effective pieces in *Best Short Stories 1988*, such as Christopher Burns's *Angelo's Passion* and Deborah Moggach's *Horse Sense*, which there is not room to discuss here; but for sheer reading pleasure, few of them can compete with any of the stories in Scott Bradfield's *The Secret Life of Houses*.[2] This collection combines a wonderfully inventive, dark sense of humour with a strong taste for fantasy, and yet manages never to belittle the serious issues in question.

Bradfield prefaces his first tale with a quotation from Nietzsche—"Without the dream one would have found no occasion for a division of the world"—and the tension between the material life and the life of the imagination is his constant theme, though one that each of the nine stories deals with in quite a different way. In *The Dream of the Wolf*, Larry Chambers finds himself hunting each night with assorted packs of wolves; in *Unmistakably the Finest*, Sandra dreams her way through a consumer catalogue, and wakes to find the contents in her apartment; in the title story, even the protagonist's house has dreams. Two of the stories focus on a literal division of body and spirit: the infuriated housewife who narrates *Greetings from Earth* is driven to leave not only her husband but her "physical vessel" as well, while in *Ghost Guessed*, Kenneth Millar is plagued by a slob of a ghost who leaves beer cans around and starts bringing home loose women.

In almost every case, the "dream" is seen to be preferable to the physical world. "When I dream of the wolf, I *am* the wolf. I've been wolves in New York, Montana and Beirut. It's as if time and space, dream and reality, have just *opened up*, joined with everything, everything *real*. I'm living the *one life*, understand?" says Larry Chambers; and so vivid and poetic are his dreams—so alive are they by contrast with the banal trappings of his waking world—that the reader cannot help but believe him. Not surprisingly, however, those around him consider him to be mad, and he is gradually prevailed upon to exchange his dreams for the life of a boring workaholic. Time and again Bradfield's characters are confronted by misguided psychoanalysts who try to silence their inner voices, but even when this seems to be for the best—as in the case of Dolores, the upwardly mobile murderess in *The Darling*—there is a sense of tragedy in their surrender: Dolores ends up drugged and befuddled, cut off from the world in which she belongs, like Mr Newton in *The Man Who Fell To Earth*.

Bradfield, however, is not intractable in his views. "I'm not saying that we should deny the world or anything", says the eponymous hero of *Dazzle*. "I'm just saying let's give our dreams a chance too. Let's maintain some faith not only in the world, but also in our dreams of it." (This is just one example of how the author makes serious points in a comic way: Dazzle is a flea-ridden dog, whose passions are pastry, philosophies of language and Third World political theory. He too gets sent to an analyst.) Brilliantly though Bradfield depicts the crassness of American game-show-and-junk-food culture, he is prepared to give a say to those who want these things. As the narrator's husband remarks in *Greetings from Earth*:

> "'The material world, and I think most people would agree with me on this, is a very nice place to be most of the time . . . . The material world has Cherry Coke.'
>
> 'I don't like Cherry Coke', I tell him. 'I like Tab, because I'm trying to cut down on my calories.'
>
> 'The material world has shopping plazas, Chevrolet Le Barons, Hostess Ho Hos, Mitsubishi, saran wrap, Johnny Walker Black Label, and Sears.'
>
> 'I can still go to Sears', I say. 'Being a disembodied essence doesn't mean you can't still go to Sears.'"

Many of Bradfield's characters, in fact, are nothing less than ideal members of their consumer society. Sandra, in *Unmistakably the Finest*, throws in her lot wholeheartedly with the Reverend Fanny Bright and the Worldwide Church of Prosperity (an inspired satiric creation), while the hero of *The "Flash!" Kid* is transformed by contact with an extraterrestrial object into an astonishing devourer of junk food:

> "Rudy, meanwhile, ate. Mountains of toast, vistas of jelly and syrup, acres of Rice Puffies and Sugar Dongs and Candy Cakes and Twinky Pies. Crushed plastic cereal toys littered the floors of his apartment. A mobile landmark, Rudy strolled immensely through the neighbourhood, easily visible from high office buildings, helicopters, incoming passenger planes."

The story is a cross between *Gargantua* and an episode of *The Twilight Zone*, and Rudy's eventual, spectacular fate is hilariously appropriate.

There is one weakness in Bradfield's writing: he uses similes too often and too casually, generally failing to find objects of comparison that are different enough to be interesting. Thus the eyes of a dead dog are "dry and vacant like the eyes of a collapsed puppet"; cigarette smoke settles on a floor "like morning mist in a swamp". When he puts his mind to it, however, he can produce a really striking image—for instance, that of a sick parent looking "collapsed and unfamiliar now, like a favourite pillow with the slipcover removed". If his next book is more strictly edited, it should be quite irresistible.

[2] *The Secret Life of Houses*. By SCOTT BRADFIELD. Unwin Hyman, £11.95.

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Books Encountered

Protectionism. By JAGDISH BHAGWATI. The MIT Press (126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD), £12.95.

Clear, succinct, and even witty, Professor Bhagwati's book should be well-thumbed and on the desk of every EC and US official handling trade. Pointing out the protectionist slew of many international institutions, and the political pressures on them, he reminds us that "Good microeconomics presupposes good macroeconomics."

Web of Words: The Ideas behind Politics. By DAVID BODANIS. Macmillan, £27.50, paper, £9.95.

Glittering, stimulating, infuriating collection of essays about the assumptions underlying not only political rhetoric but the habitual metaphors we're unaware of using. Mr Bodanis is a brilliantly observant jackdaw, not always right, but utterly addictive and surprisingly erudite. Why no index?

A Restatement of Economic Liberalism. By SAMUEL BRITTAN. Macmillan, £29.50, paper, £9.95.

Re-edition of the author's 1973 *Capitalism and the Permissive Society*, with a hundred-page postscript on developments since. A classic argument for competitive markets, but "distinct from, and in many ways opposed to, 'neoconservatism', 'the moral majority' or certain interpretations of 'Victorian values'."

Who Needs Theatre: Dramatic Opinions. By ROBERT BRUSTEIN. Faber, £14.95.

As with *Roger Rabbit*, the author brooks no question-mark; but he's not unduly dogmatic. The flavour of these sharp discursive pieces, mostly from the *New York Review of Books* and the *New Republic*, recalls that of early Kenneth Tynan or (on cinema) Pauline Kael. To me, he seems too dismissive of Shaffer and Stoppard.

Milena. By MARGARETE BUBER-NEUMANN. Translated by RALPH MANHEIM. Collins Harvill, £12.00.

A modest gem. The author met Milena Jesenska, Kafka's love, in Ravensbrück concentration camp, where she died three weeks before D-Day. Filtered through their snatched talks, a true and touching portrait of a brave, rebellious, luminous and beautiful girl: it also unforgettably communicates the reality of camp life. Impeccably translated.

Who Said What When: A Chronological Dictionary of Quotations. Edited by JOHN DAINTITH and others. Bloomsbury, £14.95.

Not a bad idea, and not simply a rearrangement of rival volumes from Oxford, Penguin, etc. Each period is divided into topics, each topic into dates. So browsing requires new habits—though two indexes, one for words, the other for authors, help tracking. The latest, from the 1980s, are the most unique.

Into the Whirlwind. By EUGENIA GINZBURG. Translated by PAUL STEVENSON and MANYA HARARI. **Within the Whirlwind.** By EUGENIA GINZBURG. Translated by IAN BOLAND. With an Introduction by HEINRICH BÖLL. Collins Harvill, £7.95 each.

Like Margarete Buber-Neumann, the author was a victim of Soviet cruelty: falsely accused of terrorism, she was sent to a labour camp. The second volume of her memoirs sees her sent to work as a prison children's nurse, falling in love with a doctor fellow-prison, and finally released after 15 years in 1955. The story has lost nothing of its poignancy since originally published in 1967 and 1979, in Italian, and in 1967 and 1981 in English. Both volumes read like a novel.

Clichés of Urban Doom and Other Essays. By RUTH GLASS. Basil Blackwell, £25.00.

Until 1988 the author was Professor and Director of the Centre for Urban Studies at University College, London; and that city attracts some of her most penetrating remarks. Allegedly the inventor of the word "gentrification", she views many recent changes with distaste, notably for planless speculation. Stern stuff.

Politics, Innocence, and the Limits of Goodness. By PETER JOHNSON. Routledge, £30.00.

Highly original, closely reasoned argument about the ethics of politics, using literature as well as political philosophy and public events to show how dangerous innocence can be—eschewing compromise, erecting absolutes, misunderstanding human nature, and often totalitarian for what it regards as excellent reasons. Idealists, please note.

The Crisis of Our Time: Reflections on the Course of Western Civilization, Past, Present, and Future. By DAVID BURNETT KING. Associated University Presses, £23.50.

The portentous, rather 1940s title risks obscuring a profound and thoughtful historical examination of whether "modern" civilisation, like those before it, is on the way to self-destruction. This is not just another nuclear-terror or eco-disaster tract, but a searching look at what "post-modern" may really mean, invoking aesthetics as well as politics, economics, and sociology.

Authenticity in Music. By RAYMOND LEPPARD. Faber, £4.95.

Gently pugnacious, unobtrusively learned, and conversationally witty essay on how differently we now listen to music, much of it (Monteverdi, Scarlatti, Bach's sons, etc.) little known to our parents and grandparents. Early MSS were so sketchy as to need Leppard's "realisations"; and over-strenuous "authenticity" can produce pedantic sterility. *Fiat laetitia!*

Chekhov: A Spirit Set Free. By V. S. PRITCHETT. John Curtis/ Hodder & Stoughton, £12.95.

One master of the short story on another. Sir Victor not only rehabilitates the stories from their occasional eclipse by the plays: he also traces their intertwining with Chekhov's life and preoccupations, including the literary influences on him, which included Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Zola. Wonderfully intimate and vivid.

Off the Rails: Memoirs of a Train Addict. By LISA ST AUBIN DE TERÁN. Bloomsbury, £12.95.

Gossipy, effervescent but reticent quasi-autobiography by an author still only in her mid-thirties, with two marriages, five novels, many travels and countless train journeys behind her. She has a sharp eye and a fine ear for conversation; but the other characters, and hers, are obscured by her determination to entertain.

The Shah's Last Ride: The Story of the Exile, Misadventures and Death of the Emperor. By WILLIAM SHAWCROSS. Chatto & Windus, £15.95.

More than you ever wanted to know about the last 18 months of Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, toppled by Ayatollah Khomeini, whisked away to exile, expelled by Morocco, refused entry by the USA and Britain, and finally settling in the Bahamas and Panama. An unedifying story, expertly told and illustrated.

The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume III 1919-1924. Edited by ANDREW MCNEILLIE. Hogarth Press, £25.00.

Mammoth 550-page treasure-house, as meticulously edited as ever. Of the 136 pieces in the book, 80 are previously uncollected: some are early versions of those revised for *The Common Reader*. Unlike most literary journalism, the articles are passionate, serious, often polemically comic, and almost all of permanent value.

R.M.

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POINTS OF THE COMPASS

Fundamentalists on the Rise

Letter from Jerusalem—By ROBERT WISTRICH

IN HIS timely and important study *Semites and Anti-Semites*,[1] the historian Bernard Lewis reasserts the conventional wisdom which regards the Arab-Israeli conflict as being essentially political—"a clash between states and peoples over real issues, not a matter of prejudice and persecution. . . ." On the other hand, he concludes that if the conflict is not quickly resolved there may be no escape "from the unending downward spiral of mutual hate that will embitter the lives of Arabs and Jews alike". The conflict, he observes, has engendered a growing corpus of myths, prejudices, and hatreds to the point that extremism on both sides is rampant. "Classical anti-Semitism"—which Lewis regards as distinctively Christian and European in provenance—has unmistakably infected Arab political and intellectual élites.

This is no longer simply a matter of government initiative. In Mubarak's Egypt since the Peace Treaty, opposition groups ranging from the Muslim Brotherhood to the Socialist Action Party have consistently used anti-Semitic expressions, motifs, and slogans as part of their political activity.[2] Theological, racial and cultural anti-Semitism have flourished in the 1980s. In Cairo, books with titles like *The War of Survival between the Koran and the Talmud* are in demand. Christian and Islamic motifs intertwine, and Muslim writers do not hesitate to spread the medieval Christian blood libel. Indeed, the current Defence Minister of Syria, Mustafa Tlas, even published a book—*The Matzah of Zion*—purporting to vindicate the notorious Damascus blood libel of 1840, when native Christians accused the local Jews of murdering a friar and his assistant, to obtain blood for the coming Passover. . . .

This new anti-Semitism cannot, of course, be divorced from the Arab-Israel conflict. In Egypt, Syria, and other Arab lands, anti-Jewish attitudes are an integral part of the effort to delegitimise Israel—not on the basis of its policies but rather because it embodies an intrinsically evil or demonic essence. In that sense, there is no real distinction between Israel and the Jews, nor between theology and politics, for the archetype of the Jews is in fact eternally fixed by Quranic scriptures and Muslim tradition. Israel simply embodies all those supposedly Jewish characteristics—egoism, envy, perfidy, fanaticism, racism, malevolence, etc.—which manifested themselves in their first encounter with Islam and have remained unchanged over the centuries. There is a plethora of material in classical Muslim sources that can be used to vindicate the current image of the Jew as an enemy of Islam and an agent of the darkest forces of evil. No doubt the trauma of Western colonialism and the even greater shock of a Jewish re-emergence in the Middle East was necessary in order to galvanise this indigenous tradition. But its roots lie in much older archetypes of the Jews as "persecutors of the Prophets" and "perverters of Allah's truth", rejectionists of the Islamic revelation and conspirators against its holy mission.

This dimension is explored in Ronald Nettler's *Past Trials and Present Tribulations*, a valuable essay on modern Islamic fundamentalist doctrine dealing with the Jews.[3] Nettler translates and comments on a text by the leading ideologue of Muslim fundamentalism, Sayyid Qutb, entitled "Our Struggle with the Jews"—which presents them as the most dangerous conspirators against the heritage of the Muslim Community. Sowing doubt, confusion, deception and apostasy, the Jews sought to shatter the unity of the Creed and the integrity of the believers. From the time that the first Islamic Community was established in 7th-century Medina, the Jews (according to Sayyid Qutb) plotted to undermine and destroy it with "every weapon and all means which the scheming Jewish genius could devise. . . ." First they gathered together the polytheistic tribes of Arabia; then they incited civil disturbances and encouraged the Sunni-Shi'a split within Islam. They constantly used Christianity and idolatry in their war against the Muslims which in modern times has culminated in the "Crusader-Zionist" assault on Palestine. It was the Jews who also fomented Communism, Atheistic Materialism, and Revolution as part of their campaign against the true faith. All forms of secularism—including secular Arab nationalism—were ultimately an instrument in the hands of world Zionism against the Muslim Community and its Creed.

[1] Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (1986).
[2] See Rivka Yadlin, *Anti-Zionism as Anti-Judaism in Egypt* (Zalman Shazar Centre, Jerusalem, 1988), Hebrew edition.
[3] Ronald L. Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist's View of the Jews* (1987).

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Qutb's views express more than simply an emotionalised Islamic variant of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Hatred of Zionism and the Jews is closely linked in this fundamentalist ideology with the sense of a civilisational crisis, a deep suspicion of modernity, and a desire for revenge on the West.[4] The return to early Islam and the ethos of *jihad* is part of the fundamentalist attempt to revitalise what they perceive as a Muslim culture and way of life threatened by decline and even collapse.[5] A combination of socio-political activism, militant faith, and struggle against both internal and external enemies may yet restore past glories. Thus the *jihad* must be waged not only against Zionism and the West but also against their own secular Westernising rulers who have betrayed Islam.

For the fundamentalists, the establishment of a Jewish State on Muslim land is the ultimate heresy; its victory over Muslims on the field of battle remains the ultimate disgrace. Anti-Semitism, by satanising the enemy, may well provide an essential compensatory function for Muslims who are unable to deal with Allah's apparent abandonment of the faithful. The Zionist (i.e. the Jew) is, it must never be forgotten, not only a concrete foe but no less importantly a metaphor for the general threat to Islam's destiny. Hence the struggle with Israel tends to take on in much of Islamic and Arab writing the character of an *apocalyptic* conflict, involving past, present, and future with no room for concession or compromise. The redemption of Islam and the Arabs—beginning with Palestine—necessarily comes to involve the destruction and downfall of Zionism and the Jews. This is not simply a local but, on the contrary, a universal conflict since the Muslim/Arab camp is confronted by an international conspiracy of vast dimensions. Islamic fundamentalism remains confident, however, that it will be able to mobilise the spiritual strength to overcome this conspiring Jewish power.

No doubt the Islamic Revolution of 1979 which successfully overthrew the reactionary "pro-American" and "Zionist agent", namely the Shah of Iran, provided a source of hope for many Muslim radicals. However, Khomeini's war against the secular, pan-Arab, and heretical régime of Saddam Hussein ended badly for Iran, and the pan-Islamic dream of unity seems as far off as ever. Far from liberating Jerusalem, Khomeini was even reduced to dealing with the American and Israeli "Satan" in order to ensure (for a time) the continuation of his *jihad* against Iraq!

THE LIBERATION OF JERUSALEM, to be sure, depends for the fundamentalists on the overcoming of apostasy, on return to the Quran and to the principles of Islam. There can be no salvation for the Arabs or Muslims in general until the source of their decline—the impact of Secularism, Modernism, and Westernisation—is uprooted from their midst. Precisely for this reason, however, there can be no peace agreement, no compromise, and no normalisation with Zionism. Such a normalisation, in the fundamentalist view, would simply facilitate the further spread of the poisons of "racist-imperialist culture" into the heart of the Muslim and Arab world. The hard-core Muslim radicals regard the fight against this danger as lying at the centre of their struggle.

FUNDAMENTALIST VIEWS of Zionism and the Jews have increasingly taken root in the Middle East in recent years. Their practical implications for Israel were already felt in the aftermath of the Lebanon war in 1982. The Shi'ite Hizbullah of Lebanon, which sprung up at that time as a militant arm of Iranian revolutionary strategy to re-establish Islamic rule in Iraq, then in Lebanon, and finally in Palestine, has demonstrated an implacable opposition to Israel. There is no doubt that they see themselves as the vanguard of a great Iranian-led *jihad* which will liberate Jerusalem. This war of redemption in the name of Allah will doubtless provide the climactic chapter to Lebanon's long drawn-out agony. The Hizbullah officially reject both Iranian and Arab nationalism, clinging instead to the myth of "a single Muslim Community". In reality, their ties are much closer to Iran and their attitudes to the Arabs bear more than a trace of patronising contempt. Only the war against Israel provides a vague common ground between them, the Sunni Muslim clergy, the Druze, and the Palestinians.

Recently, all this has impinged more directly on the Arab-Israeli conflict from inside the borders of Israel itself. The anger, bitterness, and disappointment of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation which erupted at the end of 1987 in the *intifada* has shown certain marks of fundamentalist influence. The growing contempt of the new generation, the *shabab*, which has known nothing but Israeli rule, is one indicator. This has been particularly evident in the Gaza strip, whose teeming refugee camps are a fertile breeding ground for fundamentalist sentiment. The pressure of socio-economic hardship, the traditionally religious and conservative character of the local population, the proximity to Egypt (and Egyptian fundamentalism), and the impact of the Iranian Revolution all played their part.

So, too, did the shortsightedness of Israeli policy, which in fact encouraged fundamentalists to bring in money from abroad to establish kindergartens, youth clubs, sports organisations, mosques, and Islamic colleges in Gaza and parts of the West Bank. The Israeli military leadership evidently hoped that fundamentalism might wean the youth of the territories away from the PLO. True, the Islamic sheikhs reject the nationalist ideology of the PLO and insist that Palestinian aspirations can only be realised by creating an *Islamic* State. But both ideologically and in practice, their opposition to Israel is even more intransigent than that of the Palestinian nationalists. For the ideologues of Islamic *jihad*, Israel is the spearhead of "satanic" forces aiming to create a Zionist empire from the Nile to the Euphrates. One of their main spiritual leaders in Gaza, Sheikh Rajab al-Tamimi, declared during the Palestinian rising that Israel, which sprang up "on the dead bodies of the Muslim Palestinian people [was] doomed to destruction . . . born to die".

More recently, the leading fundamentalist organisation in the occupied territories, Hamas, declared in one of the open-

[4] See Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam* (1985).
[5] On *jihad*, see Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmi, Jews and Christians under Islam* (1985).

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ing sentences of its official Covenant that "Israel will exist and continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it". Moreover, its chilling call for Israel's extinction is anchored in some of the hoariest myths of European racist anti-Semitism. Thus we read in Article 22 of the Islamic Resistance Movement's Covenant:

> "They [the Jews] were behind the French Revolution, the Communist Revolution and most of the revolutions we heard and hear about, here and there. With their money they formed secret societies, such as Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, the Lions and others in different parts of the world for the purpose of sabotaging societies and achieving Zionist interests."[6]

Indeed, "world Zionism" and "the warmongering Jews" are accused in the classic traditions of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* of having caused both World Wars "through which they made huge financial gains by trading in armaments, and paved the way for the establishment of their state" (Article 22). The "Capitalist West" and the "Communist East" are both equally guilty in the eyes of the Islamic Resistance for having permitted the "illegal usurpation" of Palestine. The only answer to this perfidious conspiracy remains unswerving loyalty to the commandment of Holy War *(jihad)* which, needless to say, rejects all peaceful solutions and the very notion of an international conference as anathema. Thus, although Hamas regards the PLO as an ally in its fight for one homeland against "an enemy common to all of us . . ." (Article 27), it sharply condemns Arafat's current so-called "peace offensive". Even acceptance of such anachronisms as the 1947 UN Partition Resolution on Palestine (something that Arafat favours and Al-Fatah now publicly supports) is seen as betrayal of "an Islamic Waqf land consecrated for Muslim generations until Judgment Day" (Article 11).

DURING THE RISING Israel has reaped the harvest of fundamentalist hatred. Islamic teachers have been among the main choir-leaders of the rioting, calling for resistance from loudspeakers attached to mosques in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Islamic calls to martyrdom—cries of "Palestine is our Holy Land" and "Allah helps those who help themselves"—have vied with the more familiar slogans of the PLO throughout the rising. There can be little doubt that a renewed belief in God and Islam has provided a powerful emotional framework for the rebels and motivated younger Palestinians to die for their cause. Hence it is not surprising that defiance of the Israeli occupation should have taken on a more openly Islamic colouring and an explicit rejection of the "corrupt" Westernised life-style blamed by fundamentalists on daily contact with Israeli society.

Their appeal among the Palestinians thrives on the despair engendered by an occupation which seems endless, permanent. They gain strength from their roots in Islamic history and popular culture—from the impotence and indifference of surrounding Arab régimes (who have been singularly unable to affect the fate of the Palestinians)—from the failures of the PLO and of secular Arab nationalism to address the traumas of modernisation. Above all, they offer a seductively simple solution to the personal and collective sufferings of the Palestinians over the past four decades.

Islam has always been a most effective symbolic system of the Arab world, a central inspiration for its ideals, social norms, laws, and future aspirations. It is at once a source both of legitimate authority and for the revolt of the oppressed. Much more than Judaism, Christianity, or other world religions it has been supremely *political* in character. Indeed, as the Ayatollah Khomeini has stated: "Islam is politics or it is nothing". Contemporary Islam has yet to demonstrate whether it can rise above the politics of hatred and fanaticism to regain that universality and tolerance which characterised Islamic civilisation at its height. This would, one surmises, entail nothing less than a revolution in contemporary Muslim thinking.

But the rise of fundamentalism, as recent events have shown, has not been confined only to Israel's Muslim population. In some respects, Israeli Jews have also been swept along by a variant of Middle Eastern fundamentalism, though the socio-political context is singularly different. For example, no religious groupings in Israel explicitly call for a Holy War against the Palestinians or any of the Arab States. Indeed, Rabbi Meir Kahane's Kach movement, the closest parallel in Israel to Islamic fundamentalist anti-Semitism, was banned because of its racist incitement against Arabs from running for the Knesset. (Moledet, a secular Right-wing nationalist party that favours the "repatriation" of Palestinians to neighbouring Arab lands did, however, obtain two seats.)

Another significant difference which reflects the depth and strength of Israel's democratic ethos is the absence of any significant Jewish fundamentalist group advocating a *revolutionary* transformation of society by violent methods. True, in certain circumstances—such as a total Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories—one can conceive of a Messianic Jewish underground taking up arms even against its own legally elected government. But none of the religious parties in the Israeli parliament—who currently hold 18 of the 120 seats—believes in violence as a legitimate method of obtaining its goals.

NEVERTHELESS, there are some disturbing similarities between Muslim and Jewish fundamentalism (the Christian Evangelical variety deserves separate treatment and cannot be dealt with here) which merit more attention than they often receive.[7] Both share, for example, a commitment to expanding the scope of the religious Law (Jewish *Halakhah* or Islamic *Shari'ah*) so that it governs the life of society and the State. Both advocate the rigorous enforcement of puritan standards in the field of entertainment, the media, the printed word and education in general. They share the same long-term vision of a religiously-controlled, exclusivist and

[6] Translated from *The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement* (Hamas), 18 August 1988.

[7] An exception is Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Contemporary Fundamentalism—Judaism, Christianity, Islam", *The Jerusalem Quarterly* (Summer 1988) No. 47, pp. 27-40.

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godly State—one that is inspired by zealous observance of the Divine Law. In such a society, classic Enlightenment values of reason, tolerance and pluralism would be seriously endangered, if not eliminated completely. Non-Jews in the Jewish State, like non-Muslims in the Muslim State, risk being branded as "infidels"; the secularists and non-believers in general might be seen as "heretics", "pagans" or even corrupters of youth; women would be returned to their pre-emancipatory condition; above all everything associated with the "tainted" secular values of modern Western society could expect short shrift.

The Israeli election results, while scarcely providing a mandate either for religious fundamentalism or for an integral nationalist vision of Greater Israel, did reveal a striking increase in *ḥaredi* (ultra-orthodox) influence and for a time even raised the spectre of a slow drift toward this kind of theocracy. Fortunately, the formation of a broad if rather elephantine Likud-Labour coalition, after weeks of agonising negotiations, seems to have closed off this particular possibility for the next few years. Apocalyptic fears of an imminent "haredisation" of Israeli society have thus far proven to be without foundation. But the underlying trends—demographic, cultural, social and political—as well as certain features of the electoral campaign and its aftermath do provide warning signs.

One dramatic example in the elections was the intervention of the 87-year-old Lubavitcher Rabbi, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, regarded as *moshiach* (the Messiah) by many of his more fanatical adherents. The Brooklyn-based Rabbi has never set foot in the Holy Land but his "super-patriotic" *Ḥabad* Hassidic movement insists that every inch of Israel belongs to the Jewish people and can never be given away! Breathing new life into the nearly defunct Agudath Israel movement (most observers believe that the missionary zeal of the Habadniks accounted for 3 of the 5 Agudah seats), they won significant support among the traditionalist (mainly Sephardi) voters of the development towns. Thus, the non-Zionist Agudah was able to break out for the first time from its Yiddish-speaking medieval enclaves like Mea Shearim or Bnei Brak and draw recruits from among the children of immigrants from the North African *mellahs*.

Even more successful in this respect was another *ḥaredi* group, Shas (Sephardi Torah Guardians Party), which obtained six seats in the Knesset and has two ministers in the present broad Coalition government. Shas's position on the territories has been hardline and, during its electoral campaign, it called for tougher measures to curb the *intifada*. But the key to its popularity was its shrewd appeal to the rich spiritual heritage of Moroccan Jewry, combined with a willingness to address real social problems among contemporary Israeli youth such as drug-taking, criminality and sexual permissiveness. It also exploited the services of a former Chief Rabbi, Ovadia Yosef (a much revered figure among most Sephardi Jews), who criss-crossed the country by helicopter, liberally dispersing blessings and curses on anyone who would listen.

Shas's synthesis of ethnic particularism and Torah values undoubtedly has an appeal for underprivileged Sephardim who, in the past, registered their resentment of the Ashkenazi Labour establishment by voting Likud. Now, disillusioned with both the major parties, fed up with interminable and mostly sterile debates about peace and the territories, they have turned back to their religious roots in growing numbers. The cult of Moroccan Jewish holy men like the Baba Sali was a pointer to what might happen, though few observers expected this traditional religiosity mixed with superstition to find effective political expression. Yet the "miracle-workers" have proven to be potent vote-catchers, as might have been predicted by anyone familiar with modern Jewish history since the late 18th century in Eastern Europe or the Middle East.

As the recent elections demonstrated, many Moroccan Jewish voters, in particular, have never really embraced modern secular, rational or Western values. Like their Ashkenazi *ḥaredi* counterparts (and like many Muslim fundamentalists) they feel themselves to be at war with modern society, alienated by its pressures, dismayed by its corrosion of religious tradition and family cohesion, deeply offended by its pluralism and permissiveness. Jewish fundamentalism, whether Zionist (in the shape of the National Religious Party under its Sephardi-oriented hawkish new leadership) or non-Zionist, has been able to fill this ideological vacuum. Like its Muslim counterparts, it has flourished against a background of collapsing secular ideologies, growing trends of irrationalism and superstition through the Middle East, unresolved social problems and distrust of the critical, scientific spirit. Among Jews, as among Muslims (and Christians too), it appeals to those troubled by a loss of identity, or sense of meaning to their lives, proposing in its place a new framework of belonging,which fuses ethnicity with religion.

YET, SPIRITUALLY speaking, this new fundamentalist religiosity is utterly barren. What really preoccupies the religious parties in Israel is to ensure the flow of funds to their *yeshivot* and other institutions; to strengthen the rabbinate and the status of rabbinical courts; and to maintain formal Sabbath observance in public. Ideally, they would not permit a single bus, taxi or tram to run on the Sabbath throughout the country. They would close down every business, restaurant, theatre or cinema; ban Saturday football games—something guaranteed to outrage the Sephardi ballot-box *Haredim* who, like many other Israelis, have no difficulty in combining synagogue and sport on the Sabbath. Most worrying of all to patriotic Israelis is the growing number of draft-deferrments to *yeshiva* students (presently estimated at 18,000 able-bodied young men) which if "haredisation" really took hold raises a very crucial question: Who, in the future, will be manning the tanks and flying the planes while *am yisroel* is studying in *yeshivot*? And who will guarantee the continuation of Israel's qualitative superiority over its enemies in the fields of science and technology, if desperately needed funds for secular education are diverted to *ḥaredi* institutions?

Most Israelis remain secular-minded, of course, and are not likely to put up tamely with the prospect of religious coercion at any time in the near future. Indeed, public pressure in favour of a Labour-Likud coalition was no doubt motivated, at least in part, by this concern. But the observant minority who already constitute between 20 and 25% of the population

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have larger families, and their numbers are growing more rapidly. In Jerusalem during the recent elections their strength was particularly palpable and is bound to increase in the future. Thus, demographic trends suggest a continuation of the current drift towards a more Oriental, a more *ḥaredi* and moderately Right-wing Israel—one that may be increasingly at odds with the traditionally liberal and pluralist Western Jewish Diaspora. The bitterness of the "Who is a Jew?" controversy and the narrowly averted split (for the present) between Israel and its American Jewish constituency is eloquent testimony to that danger. Almost certainly, Mr Shamir's readiness to make substantial concessions to Labour was due to his unwillingness to be made a prisoner of Israeli orthodox intransigence in rejecting the validity of Conservative and Reform conversions to Judaism. If "the Law of Return" were to be amended, as proposed by the religious parties in Israel, there is no doubt that this would substantially reduce the enthusiasm, the readiness and the ability of American Jewry to intervene on Israel's behalf with the American administration, the Congress and public opinion. This is not something that Mr Shamir could afford, with the *intifada* still raging and the PLO scoring diplomatic points in Algiers, Stockholm and Geneva.

The Likud leadership remains convinced, of course, that PLO moderation is purely cosmetic and that, despite appearances, its basic philosophy and aims remain unchanged—namely the destruction of Israel in stages. The official Israeli position (shared also by most of the Labour leaders) is that Arafat can never be a partner for peace since the *raison d'être* of the PLO is the total "liberation of Palestine". The radical factions within the PLO will never renounce this objective and indeed they have not even indirectly declared their willingness to recognise Israel or to abandon armed struggle.

Even many doveish Israelis, it must be said, were also disappointed by the tortured ambiguities of the PNC (Palestine National Council) Resolutions at Algiers at the end of November 1988. These statements condemned terrorism while supporting the struggle for independence by means which include violence against Israeli civilians. They supported the 1947 Partition Resolution calling for an Arab Palestine, while ignoring the part that laid the legal foundation for Israel as a Jewish State. The Resolutions did not explicitly limit the future Palestine State to the West Bank and Gaza; they simply called for these areas to be handed on a platter to the PLO by the UN, following an Israeli withdrawal, without any process of direct negotiation. This is all the more disturbing for Israelis since, in PLO literature, the West Bank/Gaza State is only an "interim" solution, and pre-1967 Israel is still considered "occupied Palestine". Above all, the PNC seemed willing only to imply recognition of Israel's existence without actually doing so.

ADMITTEDLY, in Geneva, Arafat did finally utter the magic words that the United States had insisted upon in order to open a dialogue with the PLO. He condemned terrorism, declared his willingness to embark on a process of negotiation and appeared to accept the right of Israel to exist—though this was by no means the full, unequivocal acknowledgment that the majority of Israelis would find acceptable. Moreover, a statement for a foreign audience, aimed primarily at the Americans, can hardly cancel out decades of terror, hijackings and murder with which Arafat's PLO is indelibly linked. Nothing in the PLO statement can bind Palestinian fanatics like the Abu Nidal group, Abu Mussa's rebel Fatah faction or Jibril's Syrian-controlled Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine from pursuing their bloodstained path to total redemption. Indeed, for them, as for the Syrians and Libyans, Arafat is already beyond the pale.

Nor is there any sign in Israel of a creative response to Arafat's moves—with foreign policy now controlled by the Likud in what promises to be a sclerotic government that seems incapable of taking any bold step to solve the Palestinian problem. The "iron fist" policy will undoubtedly continue while the uprising, despite all the international sympathy it may have generated, is unlikely to bring about any real improvement in the position of the Palestinians. In this situation, the Islamic fundamentalists, the pro-Syrian groups and the radical PLO factions may well increase their base of support, especially if Arafat's strategy produces no tangible fruits. All these groups of "true believers"—whether secular or religious—despise the PLO public relations offensive to win over Western countries and continue to openly proclaim their desire to destroy Israel. Their capacity to sabotage any compromise settlement cannot be doubted. Thus, despite the PLO's change of course, the prospects of peace in this troubled region still remain bleak.

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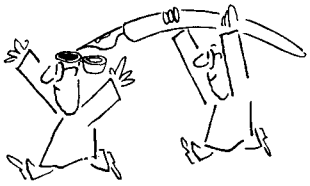
MEDIA

The Art of the Interview

or, the Difficulties of Asking a Question & Getting an Answer

By MELVIN J. LASKY



THERE is a unique quality of masterfulness which George Urban distinctively brings to his interviews,[1] and it forces one to think a little about the origins and the history of the form.

We know it today mostly in the bastardised version of a dialogue or a conversation which appears in our newspapers and on our television screens. A lowly reporter asks simple (and often simple-minded) questions of a great statesman. An arrogant TV personality tries to embarrass a man of affairs and make him look silly, helpless, or guilty. A gossip columnist probes hopefully for some scandal or, at least, an indiscretion.

But then one could, of course, also go back over the centuries and the millennia to work out how difficult and complex it has been historically to ask proper questions and elicit worthwhile answers. Certainly, Socrates did not find it easy, for all his philosophical mastery, to put useful questions to all those curious, but often illogical and sometimes lazy, young Athenians in the *agora*. A thousand years later we would find Giordano Bruno bypassing all the difficulties of a genuine dialogue, by writing all the dramatic exchanges himself, as if the Renaissance mind needed no old-fashioned question marks but only the final, authentic full-stop itself. All this, however, would take us too far afield.

The modern usage of the word "interview"—and it has been taken over as a *Fremdwort* in German, French and most other European languages—derives from the English or, rather, an original American coinage. As such, it is just a little more than a century old. In its original meaning it had, of course, nothing to do with journalism, and referred to a formal or ceremonial meeting (*entrevue*) of great persons, as when Henry VIII met François I at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Montaigne refers to ceremonies in the "interview of Kings".

As late as 1875, an American translator of *Faust* tried to explain certain Goethean phrases by annotating "the interview of Satan with the Lord in the first and second chapters of Job. . . ." By that time, however, some of his readers may have been forgiven for wondering whether the exclusive interview would have been published in heaven or hell.

Hell, most probably. For the breakthrough of the interview-form in modern journalism was widely considered an infernal new device. In 1869 the New York *Nation* observed:

> "The 'interview', as at present managed, is generally the joint production of some humbug of a hack politician and another humbug of a newspaper reporter."

And in the same year the New York *Daily News* complained:

> "A portion of the daily newspapers of New York are bringing the profession of journalism into contempt, so far as they can, by a kind of toadyism or flunkeyism, which they call 'interviewing'. . . ."

In London, the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1886) went even further:

> "The interview is the worst feature of the new system: it is degrading to the interviewer, disgusting to the interviewee, and tiresome to the public."

STILL THE new practice—of journalists conversing directly with important persons with the object of obtaining matter for publication—could as well produce a brilliant and accurate document as an irresponsible piece of scandalous gossip. The editors of the *Pall Mall Gazette* had to concede that "Among the permanent gains of the year [1884] the acclimatisation of the 'interview' in English journalism certainly should be reckoned. . . ."[2]

For all its "low" origins, the art of interviewing in the context of the so-called New Journalism of the late 19th century reached its high point in the "exclusive scoops" which M. de Blowitz, the celebrated Paris correspondent of *The Times* of London, managed to obtain with Kings, Popes, and Chancellors.

[1] A collection of George Urban's interviews, *Can the Soviet System Survive Reform?*, will be published this spring by John Spiers Limited. Many of them were originally published in ENCOUNTER, including his conversations with Milovan Djilas (September-October and November 1988), Vladimir Bukovsky (November 1987, January 1988), Alain Besançon (May and June 1987), Galina Vishnevskaya (December 1986, January 1987), and Max M. Kampelman (February 1985).

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933), Volume V, p. 425.

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The most memorable was in the year 1878 with Prince Bismarck who, during the Berlin Congress of that summer, invited "the prince of journalists" to a private dinner at his apartment in the Wilhelmstrasse. The conversation was evidently frank and free, and M. de Blowitz—whose absolutist credo was that everything that was said to him anywhere belonged to his newspaper and the public—subsequently published a long *Times* interview quoting huge chunks of Bismarck's table-talk, verbatim. Having already published the text of the Berlin Treaty before the signatures were dry on the confidential document (somehow, mysteriously "leaked" to him), M. de Blowitz incurred the wrath of the German Chancellor who openly attacked him in the *Reichstag*.[3]

M. de Blowitz found Bismarck an almost overpowering personality, but in his effort to "correct my first impressions and judge the Chancellor with perfect impartiality" he proceeded to quote a liberal critic, who described Bismarck, the German "Iron Chancellor", as treating the Germans "as if he had conquered us. . . ." This could not fail to displease. As Blowitz remarked, Bismarck "has such an opinion of his own infallibility that he deems eulogy an impertinence and censure a blasphemy. . . ."

One final, personal impression after some five hours of conversation in the Wilhelmstrasse is worth quoting as the kind of pontifical wisdom which 19th-century interviewers went in for at their interpretative best.

> "Whatever the greatness or genius of a man, he fails in his mission as leader of a nation when he seeks to substitute his single will for the collective will of the people, and when, instead of training them in the wise exercise of liberty, he tries to make them share the melancholy lot of nations which abdicate in favour of one man, even though a man of genius."[4]

THE STERLING merit of "the art of interviewing", as exemplified in the work of George Urban, is almost unprecedented in modern journalism. In the first place, it avoids all the traditional pitfalls of ephemeral newspaper efforts: superficiality, sensationalism, sauciness. One can appreciate the iconoclastic interviews of Oriana Fallaci, but at the same time wonder whether it was necessary for her to undress before the Ayatollah Khomenini in Qu'om, or to provoke Lech Walesa to angry impatience in Warsaw. One can value the recorded conversations of Emil Ludwig with Stalin and Mussolini, and of Edgar Snow with Mao Tse-tung, and still regret their inability to formulate a challenging, not to say a disagreeable, question. Recent American television interviews with the visiting Mikhail Gorbachov were polite to the point of obsequiousness.

In the second place, unlike most of his fellow-practitioners, Urban is a journalist and historian with wide-ranging scholarly interests. From his early Budapest days as a student in George Lukács's philosophy seminar, and his work on the Stefan George *Kreis*, to his current global assignments as an "intellectual consultant" for Radio Free Europe, he has been both a specialist and a generalist in the fields of social science and literature. He has read the books. He would turn up for long sessions at Arnold Toynbee's house with marked copies of the twelve volumes of *A Study of History*. He will probe the twists and turns of politics and philosophy in the work of George Kennan and Leszek Kolakowski with detailed references to all of their writings, early and late. Perhaps one should take this kind of intellectual preparation for granted, but it is, nevertheless, quite rare. One wonders how much Signora Fallaci knows about Islam or about Polish history; how deeply Herr Ludwig had studied Bolshevism or Fascism, or how incisive a grasp of Chinese ideology Mr Snow actually had.

I won't even bother to make the contrast with interviews whose immortal achievement (as in the notorious *Playboy* session with Jimmy Carter) is the revelation that a puritanical US President was capable of "lusting after women" in his heart. Nor with the interviewers who have become famous on our television screens, for obviously their concern is more with images than ideas.

IN THE THIRD PLACE, all of the interviews of George Urban have had the great good fortune not to have been prepared under the pressure of urgent deadlines. He has had the time—hours, days, weeks—to put his questions, double-check his recorded transcripts, return for clarifications and additions, and even then to revise, at the last minute, for maximum precision. Small matters of stylistic detail (a motto in the Brzezinski interview) or delicate aspects of high politics (whether, after Tito's death, Djilas really wants some reference to his own career which might put him back into prison) all call for the most patient exercise of scholarly responsibility. Having myself published a number of these texts in ENCOUNTER, with hectic preludes of corrections on proof and postponement of schedules, I know how trying for an editor this species of *akribie* can be. But that is why, in thinking of the work of George Urban, I have been reminded often of Max Weber's remark that there is a kind of *haut journalisme* which is indeed a form of scholarship and akin to the highest intellectual activities.

I suspect that I will not be alone among the readers of these marvellously inquiring "conversations" who will remain tantalised by the temptation to put a few questions of their own to the long-distance questioner; indeed to interview the interviewer. And so I have done.

ALTHOUGH *you have a reputation for fairness and objectivity, I hope you will not be upset by the suspicion that a great many of your dialogues or conversations were not exactly conducted in the spirit of disinterested enquiry. I think of your devastating interviews with Ambassador Averell W. Harriman (insisting that Stalin was a very kind man) and also with Alexander Zinoviev (who persisted in satirising himself).*

[3] *Memoirs of M. de Blowitz* (New York, 1903).
[4] Frank Giles, *A Prince of Journalists: The Life and Times of de Blowitz* (London, 1962), p. 149.

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URBAN: Yes, in the sense that the interrogative method itself is a rather subtle way of loading any discussion. Certain assumptions are built into the questioning, and they inevitably set the framework in which the answers are elicited. Even when the questioner's frame of reference is rejected (and it often is), I concede that the discussion tends to move in step—negative step—with it.

—Still, you're confident that there is a positive movement forward to new insights, fresh information, even important truths?

URBAN: The interrogative method has certain specific advantages. While unfavourable to the display of background and contextual information, it is a truth-detector of particular sensitivity. It picks up the false, the mendacious and the phoney, but will also register misjudgment, incompetence, and plain folly. It is crude to the extent that the knowledge it conveys is limited by the constraints of question and answer, the yes/no type of communication. But this crudeness imposes a wholesome rigour which the more leisurely historical narrative cannot always match.

—But the interrogative mode has its pitfalls too. You must know how dangerous and narrow the line is between the interrogative and the inquisitorial.

URBAN: Yes, the interviewee is—voluntarily, but vulnerably—in the hands of the questioner. But the interviewer has a responsibility to the man who has agreed to expose himself to his curiosity. The two should feel (even if they seldom do) that they are engaged in a joint enterprise.

HAVE YOU *then, always found yourself to be a collaborator and never a conspirator? You have been challenging a wide variety of contemporary intellectuals, and you cannot possibly have a responsibility to all of them that overrides the graver responsibility to, let us say, history.*

URBAN: True, one often finds that in this wrestling with problems, one cannot get a fair grip on them. Disinterested curiosity may not be firm enough. The political or intellectual commitment of the interlocutor may be so strong that it calls for a balancing commitment of one's own. This may, I am convinced, warrant some deviation from the rule that an interview is an exchange of ideas between two informed parties, and not a trial or a cross-examination. But when an interview turns into a "trial", I have often found, to my dismay, that the trial has been my own. My friend the philosopher, or the politician, or the academic expert, can speak from the security of a lifetime's experience and knowledge. Sometimes the best that the interviewer can do is to cover up his ignorance by the intensity of his probing.

—Are you confessing to a certain spiritual deference to the "great names" whom you have asked to submit themselves to your interrogation?

URBAN: No; on the whole, not at all. Looking back at two decades of these conversations I have been conducting, I would say that I learned most of all something about the nature of historical experience.

What I found most disturbing, though not really very unexpected, is the narrow perspective and partiality of the men "who were there". I found this especially striking when set side by side with the accounts of those who were *not* there but who took the trouble to listen, read, and think to some purpose and with a question in mind. Let me put it quite candidly. The contemporary historian with a certain intellectual integrity—even if he has never set foot on the scene of action—tends to be a more profound observer than the eye-witness or even the participant. To have been there is no guarantee of having understood. All too often, if he is not blessed with certain intellectual gifts of the historian, his account will be one-dimensional, biased, or simply banal.

—But surely this is not very surprising. Gibbon or Mommsen understood more about the Roman Empire than Caesar or even Marcus Aurelius. Burckhardt is a more comprehensive guide to Renaissance Florence than even Machiavelli or Guicciardini. To understand the whole meaning of the Russian Revolution we rely less on Trotsky or John Reed or even Sukhanov than on Leonard Schapiro, Richard Pipes, or Adam Ulam.

URBAN: I would hesitate to rehearse so trite a conclusion were it not for the current fetishism of "on-the-scene" reporting, together with the Radio- and Television-induced cult of interviewing politicians with an eye and ear on "Instant History". I believe in the interview form, and yet I find myself deflating the importance and self-importance of the eye-witness. He would have understood more if he had read more and seen less.

—A last question. If one takes them all together (and in your current book we have only a small selection, all from the 1980s), your interviews are in a way a history of our own times. Do you see your work in that comprehensive way?

URBAN: No, I'm afraid I do not. In the end I feel saddened by the sullen disinclination of human affairs to yield an intelligiable story. The "question and answer" method underlines a truth well-known to students of human affairs: "history in the raw" is stubborn and chaotic. It carries no "natural theme", no "obvious pattern". It imparts no "message". The themes of history are laboriously hewn out by the historian; and they are contained in, if often anticipated by, his questioning. He alone can impose an articulate form on what is essentially ambivalent, haphazard, grotesque, and accidental. If I may put it that way, that is his compact with civilisation.

THE INTERVIEW over, we were both left with small secret notebooks, replete with prepared questions, and indeed prepared answers, that somehow never got their cue or opportunity. We both offered each other, on parting, little slips of paper which would have been so useful, so

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illuminating, if only the moment had come for their appropriate insertion into the conversation. Mine was a quotation (and oh, how I would have loved somehow to fit it in!) from an Elizabethan classic, from the pen of Sir Thomas Elyot (1540):

> "Being sore shaken with my sweete woordes and longe entervieu they yield at the last. . . ."

Urban's was a passage from Plato's dialogue, the *Gorgias*:

> "CALLICLES: Couldn't you finish the argument alone, either in a continuous speech or answering your questions yourself?
>
> SOCRATES: One doing the work of two. . . ? It looks as if it will have to be like that."

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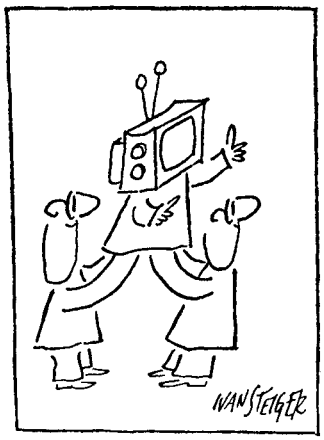
LANGUAGE

Emblems & the TV Image-Merchants

Electronic Woodcuts—By BERNARD RICHARDS



THE EMBLEM is often thought to be a dead form, but I should like to suggest that, in fact, it is alive and well, and principally living on television news programmes.

The emblem tradition flourished most vigorously in the Renaissance, when it was the principal mode of bridging two cultures—the culture of the image and the culture of the word. There were scores of emblem books in the 16th and 17th centuries, the first English one being Whitney's *Choice of Emblems* (1586). To open an emblem book was to be presented with enigmatic little woodcuts, explained and made meaningful by verbal texts. The pictures derived from a wide range of sources: including medieval bestiaries; encyclopaedias of plants and minerals; pagan and Christian legend and history; fables and folklore; religious hieroglyphs; familiar objects; and especially recondite images.

Without the explanatory texts many of the woodcuts would either have been excessively broad or impossibly enigmatic in their applications, but with the appended texts the meanings became specific and manageable. The pictures presented without texts were often riddles—but with the texts they were riddles explained. Emblems are a branch of symbolism, a symbolism that is explained rather than mysterious, specific rather than widely suggestive, limited rather than open-ended, and often rather *ad hoc* in application.

Sometimes, emblems have the kind of natural meaning that we associate with symbolism, while at other times they transmit wayward and particular meanings that in no way resemble the inevitable resonance of the symbol.

Perhaps the best-known instance of the emblem frame of mind in operation is the series of casket scenes in *the Merchant of Venice*. The emblem there is the static equivalent of allegory, which is likewise a branch of symbolism. It is symbolism circumscribed and delimited, and hence looked down on by visionary poets such as Blake and Yeats. Some emblematists in the Renaissance thought that the world itself was a series of enigmatic emblems to be decoded, and that the analytical process would take one to the heart of the mysteries of the universe and to God; but others realised that the association of image and meaning was often no more than a passing and ingenious fancy, "a witty conceit", as it would have been called then.

The emblem habit of mind had wide appeal: on the one hand, it was the playing and amusement of the scholar and courtier; on the other hand, it was very populist, and presented the ordinary man with ideas he could grasp and remember in a visual form. It was generally recognised in the Renaissance that the visual embodiment of an idea made it more accessible and amenable.

Gradually, the erudite taste for emblems went into decline; it was one of the casualties of a rational and sceptical 18th century. But at the popular level it clung on into the 19th century, and many a religious and moral truth continued to be conveyed to ordinary people by means of the striking image.

THE FIRST TIME I consciously registered an emblem on TV was in a documentary programme on the 1930s written many years ago by Malcolm Muggeridge. The script went something like this: "And having taken a bite out of Czechoslovakia, Hitler proceeded to make a meal of Poland." The accompanying film clip showed the *Führer* at a picnic. I remember thinking *then* that it was highly amusing, but that was a long time ago, and I doubt whether I should *now* think it other than trite and tiresome, since I have seen altogether too many emblems. Consider the following examples, mostly taken from the news:

"British Leyland's future is shaky" (picture of lorry driving on two wheels).

"It's an uphill struggle for Land Rover" (picture of a Range Rover driving up a flight of stairs, 19 February 1986).

"The prospect for the oil industry is cloudy" (picture of clouds drifting in front of an oil rig, 4 February 1986).

"Time is up for this colliery" (picture of broken clock-face on a pit-head tower).

"The days of this football club are numbered" (picture of caretaker closing gate—the implication being that it is for the last time, although in the real world it was perhaps just an arranged closure for the film crew).

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"It's the end of the road for British Shipbuilding" (camera zooms in on a battered no-through-road sign near the yard, 14 May 1986).

"François Guillaume chews over the problem of being a French farmer" (picture of eating; a rehash of the Muggeridge device, 22 April 1986).

Sometimes they fly thick and fast. The following all appeared on the same day (28 February 1986):

"Aquino dolls are soft, but Corazon Aquino has steely strength" (picture of Aquino dolls).

"The Space Shuttle's future is murkier than ever" (picture of a rocket sticking up through the mist).

"Printworkers at Wapping are not making much headway" (picture of pickets pushing against a line of policemen outside the factory).

Often they exhibit a dreary inevitability, as when the BBC's John Cole pressed the poor old *Cutty Sark* into service during the Greenwich by-election, to make some trite comment about "jumping ship" and "taking a compass-bearing" (24 February 1987). Sometimes they take on a positively surrealistic fantasy.

"In America they let the Queen go to their heads" (picture of the Queen watching a girl prancing by with a six-foot-wide hat, topped with a model of the Houses of Parliament sprouting from the centre of Buckingham Palace, 18 April 1986).

Ten days later, David Steel was seen throwing a green wellington-boot—why do politicians do such things? This was interpreted "as preliminary to giving conservatives the boot". On 7 February 1988, Gary Hart was seen (as part of his bid to capture the hearts and minds of the electors in the Iowa Primary) throwing an axe at a target and missing. This was interpreted an an indication that he was finding the political target "increasingly elusive". Other hapless candidates were seen cycling along "a road to oblivion".

SOMETIMES, by a process of selection, the real world provides ready-made emblems. My favourite from recent times was when Michael Foot began his General Election campaign by saying "We are on the road to victory", and banged the roof of a car for emphasis. Then he looked inside the empty car and asked. "Where's the driver?" It was mischieviously malicious for the newscasters to scoop this pointed piece of absurdity from the chaotic current of contemporary life, but it shows what principles of selection can accomplish. Doubtless, the Labour Party would want to point to this incident as flagrant evidence of Right-wing bias in the BBC; but it would be more accurate to indentify it as part of the cast of mind of TV programme-makers, who will sacrifice anything from any point in the political spectrum to make what they regard as a telling point in visual terms.

Emblems are also very much the stock-in-trade of Britain's "Party Political Broadcasts". On 22 April 1986, the Labour Party showed the visual image of "shadows of unemployment on our green and pleasant land"—clouds floating over a piece of countryside. These guileless clouds, like the two examples from the news programmes, were natural, but co-opted to be representative of something quite different. The Conservative Party Political Broadcast (of 9 April 1986) was a positively dreadful creaking sequence of car emblems—enough to put one off voting Conservative for life (if one had ever considered doing such a thing). This was not helped when it was followed, that same evening, by Woody Allen's *Sleeper*, whose sophisticated and sceptical use of images blitzed any amateurish or pretentious programmes preceding or following it.

Officials at the various Party headquarters would do well to consider what the adjacent programmes might be before choosing their slots. These days politicians try to call the tune, and offer to photo-journalists what they call "photo opportunities", but the cameramen prefer to catch their own: Norman Willis, for instance, standing next to a sign saying "FUDGE". During party conferences at Blackpool, photographers hang around near a shop sporting the name "ON THE ROCKS", hoping for a hapless public figure to wander by.

IN PARTY political broadcasts we encounter concocted emblems; but in the news programmes, for the most part, fragments of the real world are appropriate to illustrate the verbal text, to fuse image and message inseparably together. Often, it is no more than a visual underlining of the verbal content. For pity's sake, on 6 May 1987, the hackneyed phrase "at-the-end-of-the-day" was illustrated by a picture of a sunset, as if we were about to forgo language altogether, and lapse into a wilderness of ideograms.

Television emblems do, in fact, exhibit the same range as their Renaissance ancestors; some are spectacularly trite and commonplace, others are witty and fanciful, appealing to the *acutezza* of *cognoscenti*. TV pundits would doubtless claim that the recognition of the emblem is all part of some pervasive entity called "TV literacy"; part of the vast semiotic system which binds Western viewers together. But isn't it time to recognise that the device is over-used, tiresome, and even pernicious? Unless the viewer is vigilant he starts to lose touch with a sense of the necessary, natural, and inevitable meaning of a spectacle, and becomes unable to distinguish the essential from the contingent.

One is tempted, if over-exposed to the image-merchants, towards the view that the whole world itself is a vast sign-system that can be read, and to concur with those Renaissance mystics who believed that the world contained an inherent rather than a contingent system of meaning; and with Baudelaire, who, writing in *Correspondances*, suggested that the world was a vast temple which let loose confused messages.

The net result of the news programmes is to imply this, but such a world-view must be questioned, since surely the readings of images offered in the news are often as *ad hoc*, as fanciful and as arbitrary as the readings of the phenomenal world which were encountered when the emblem books flourished in the Renaissance.

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In its more mystical role, the emblem suggests that there are magical connections in the universe, that the whole fabric is somehow animated and held together by mysterious filaments and that it contains inherent and intended meaning. But alongside such a view, there existed, in the Renaissance, the contradictory belief that objects and events could sustain a variety of interpretations rather than demand a single and exclusive reading. A mystical view of the universe as a vessel containing definite and deducible meaning is precisely the kind of thing that rational people would wish to guard against.

Even a writer like Charles Dickens, whose works have a tendency to purvey this type of primitive animism, was sceptical enough to realise that his more grown-up readers would have a built-in resistance to so childish and primitive a view. To anticipate their responses and to protect himself from accusations of fanciful childishness, Dickens incorporated into his fantasies phrases such as "*as if*" or "*one might imagine*".' In *Bleak House* the flakes of soot are "as big as full-grown snow-flakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. . . ."

As a novelist, Dickens exercises privileges over the worlds he creates, but the "*as if*" habit is on view in his travel-writing too: "I beheld a Punch's Show leaning against a wall near Park Lane, as if it had fainted. . . ." "The chemist had . . . nothing but his great goggle-eyed red bottles, looking as if the winds of winter and the drift of the salt-sea had inflamed them."

But the rational reader knows that such inter-relations are not possible—at least not in the world that we inhabit.

MODERN NEWSCASTERS find this phrase "*as if*" as useful as Dickens did. On 12 September 1986, to celebrate the City's share flotation of the TSB, hundreds of balloons were released, but not all of them made it into the air, "as if", said the commentator, "to reflect the uncertainty of the Stock Market". As in Dickens, we are given a magical picture of the universe in one hand, only to have it snatched away by the other. Perhaps in this schizophrenic activity we have as good a definition of "fancy" as any other.

Viewers like myself face a dilemma at this point, since it would seem that the object of acquiring a highly self-conscious "TV literacy" is to protect oneself from the side-effects of television and to gain immunity from its baneful operations. With appropriate vigilance it is possible to see through the methods, to (in modern parlance) "deconstruct" them. But the problem is that the images and emblems are actually debased forms of images whose operation is valued and respected in literature and the visual arts; and there is a danger that built-in resistance will be so strong and pervasive that it will prevent the viewer from taking any symbolic statements seriously. Of course, this is what card-carrying Deconstructionists want for literature and the other arts, whereas those who value aesthetic experience might want normal reception to be resumed once the television set has been switched off.

More caution and self-restraint should be shown by the newscasters, since the conceited forms of wit ultimately downgrade the importance of people's lives. Sometimes, one feels that the ludicrous excesses creeping into new programmes derive from states of mind very similar to the decadent Mannerism that came to afflict high Renaissance culture, in its restless search for ingenuity and novelty. Most viewers must by now have realised that most of what applies to the news also applies to advertising, where a debased and perverted form of the emblem tradition is also in operation—but that is another story.

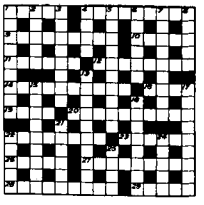
THE EMBLEM TRADITION in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance had an exemplary function: it was developed to convey general and typical truths, and specific historical events—historical personages were dehistoricised and transmuted into eternal types. Once transmuted in this way, the originals appeared with a hieratic or a heraldic stiffness and were contemplated as timeless and absolute: Aeneas carrying his father Anchises from burning Troy; Brutus falling on to his sword.

In some ways an identical process exists in the newscaster's world: individuals are held up for contemplation as salient types, both famous personages and lowly and anonymous individuals. John Kennedy's assassination is shown over and over again as a cinematic icon, as are the Palestinian demonstrators being mercilessly beaten by Israeli soldiers.

This is not new of course: George Orwell's woman in *The*

Double Crossed Words

London



CROSSWORD COMPILERS *may have tortuous minds but by and large they are a harmless, peaceable lot. The exemplar of our craft, I like to think, is Adrian Bell, the composer of the first "Times" crossword, whom I picture walking in his garden and plucking out of the air such felicities as:*

"the cylinder is jammed (5, 4)", SWISS ROLL

I DO NOT THINK **the cribs would give much help, for example, with the three clues that seem to have given most difficulty lately:**

"Born to a single parent, that's a limitation (7)", MAXIMUM. (Max Born, 1882-1970, British nuclear physicist and Nobel prize winner.)

"Join a shy Lady Jane (4)", GREY. (A shy joined—ashy, or grey.)

"Water—originally one of the elements (8)", TUNGSTEN. (Original letter of water, W, is the symbol for tungsten or wolfram.)

ALL SORTS OF BOOKS *now purport to tell you how to beat the compiler. There are solvers' dictionaries that give you lists of famous people, geographical features, the emperors of Rome, and so on. One such work even has 32 entries under the heading* **"Inflammation"**, *including the word* **gorget**, *inflammation of a cow's udder.*

I can tell the publishers here and now that "The Times" crossword is going to limp along without this common little word, so their book is already seriously defective.

John Grant
in THE TIMES (*London*)

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Road to Wigan Pier poking a stick up a blocked drain is held frozen for all time as an *exemplum* of human misery. It can be very effective, and the advantage that television has over crude woodcuts is that, even when isolated as typical, raw and unmediated, life often does survive the selecting and editing process in all its telling particularity. In other words, we can see that persons or events are capable of being emblematised, yet they are also capable of resisting such appropriation and possible misinterpretation so as to remain individual and living. On the whole, in the early emblem book this dual role of the general and the particular was not possible.

WHAT WE HAVE ALSO witnessed recently is a recognition that the emblem has become such a necessary part of media events that people running them try self-consciously to create emblems which can be offered to the camera. Those red carnations scattered for Jewish dissidents in February 1986, were they symbols or emblems? Emblems probably. It takes time for an emblem to become a symbol. The red Flanders poppies did not become symbols for the war-dead overnight; and there is an understandable resistance to the idea that white poppies may be suddenly foisted on to the public as emblems of peace. The organisers of the event realised that a cause can gain impact and memorability from a vivid associated image. And it was a gift for the cameras.

There is a strong tendency on the part of the public to resist media magicians, so that those hot-air balloons in Brussels that were co-opted (on 30 June 1987) to symbolise 30 years of hot air in the European Community, also resolutely remained discrete objects as they floated away from the commentators into free space. And President Reagan (on 6 October 1987) did, after all, simply stumble on the steps of the White House: the accident stubbornly refused to become a visual indication of his difficulties with a Supreme Court nomination or with any other of his Washington problems.

The modern "electronic woodcuts" that I have identified, like the actual woodcuts in the 16th and 17th centuries, cover a fairly wide spectrum—populist and obvious (at one end), élitist, witty, fanciful, and even erudite (at the other). Both kinds, however, are irritating, and can very rapidly pall.

Evita

O Evita, indefatigable eater!

She looks up when she hears me,
this great grass-processing plant,
this walking liquidiser
flicking bashful lashes at the flies.

Wet grey nose nuzzling tussocks,
sumptuous cow flesh, silky rump,
barrel held surprisingly
on short supports, neat ankles,
dainty, divided feet.

That huge sack almost sweeps the ground.
Her outline would be elegant, though stout,
if she were not a martyr
to motherhood and milk.

When I approach to stroke her
she's skittish—bovine hoofer,
udder jigging, jogging, flopping.
I'd like such enormous, bouncing,
swinging tits—just for an afternoon.
And for a night.

Perhaps she'd like to be without
—she'd dance then alright!
She'd levitate,
rise through the ozone layer,
go waltzing round the moon.

Carole Satyamurti

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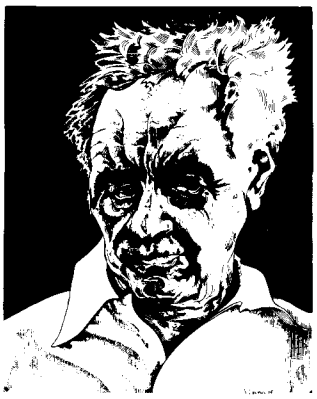
INTERVIEW

Elia Kazan

By Christopher Cook



IF HE HAD DONE nothing else in a lifetime in the American theatre and cinema, Elia Kazan would have won himself a distinguished place in Hollywood history by directing *On the Waterfront*. But Kazan has done much more. His movies include *Gentleman's Agreement, Panic in The Streets, A Streetcar Named Desire, East of Eden, The Arrangement* and, most recently, *The Last Tycoon*. At the same time, he has been a man of the American theatre. It was Kazan's directing skill which was midwife to the talents of Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, William Inge, and Robert Anderson on the Broadway stage, with such plays as *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Death of a Salesman,* and *Tea and Sympathy*: a roll-call of the very best of American drama in the late 1940s and 1950s. And now, with six novels to his credit, Elia Kazan has written an autobiography, called simply *A Life*.

Kazan was born of Greek parents, who emigrated to America from Anatolia in Turkey at the beginning of the century. Young Kazan turned his back on a career in commerce and, after an Ivy League education, joined the radical Group Theatre in New York as an actor in the early 1930s. Radical politics led him to join the Communist Party of America, from which he resigned in 1937. But the professional friendships he established with members of the Group Theatre—including its two moving spirits, Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg (later to create the so-called "method" school of acting), and the playwright Clifford Odets—were to last a lifetime.

It was these friendships which particularly interested the House Un-American Activities Committee when it subpoenaed Kazan to testify in Washington in 1952, insisting that he name his fellow-members of the Communist Party from when he was a member of the Group Theatre. Kazan, by now a successful stage director and well regarded in Hollywood after such successes as *Panic in the Streets* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, chose to give the Committee the names they wanted. And now for the first time, in his new autobiography, Kazan explains his reasons for cooperating with the House Un-American Activities Committee—a decision which incurred the odium of liberal intellectuals throughout America. But in this ample autobiography Kazan, now 79, recalls much more than the events of that one day in a Washington committee room. It is a complete life in the cinema and the theatre with Kazan standing centre stage, filmed in close up, without filters, and not always in the best light which so many entertainment autobiographies choose for themselves.

ELIA KAZAN'S *"A Life" was published last year by André Deutsch in London, and Alfred A. Knopf in New York.*

CHRISTOPHER COOK *reviews movies for the BBC World Service and Radio 3, and is a regular presenter of the radio arts programmes "Kaleidoscope" and "Third Ear". He was for three years Head of the Department of Liberal Studies at the Central School of Art and Design in London, where he taught courses in film history and theory; he is currently teaching a course on British cinema to visiting American students. He writes on the cinema for "The Listener", "Films & Filming", "Sight and Sound",* and ENCOUNTER *("In the Cornucopia", January 1988). His interview was broadcast on the "Third Ear" programme of BBC Radio 3.*

PERHAPS I CAN BEGIN *by asking why you chose Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the model for your autobiography? What was it about Rousseau's confessions that made you want to emulate his achievement?*

ELIA KAZAN: Well, correctly or incorrectly, I felt that he didn't choose to leave out anything, and I feel that most autobiographies leave out things that are essential to understanding the person . . . the shame, or embarrassment, or a desire to build themselves up or make themselves look better. I decided, if I was going to go to all this trouble, I would go all the way; and I felt Rousseau did that. I don't think I excuse myself, I don't think I'm easy on myself. I think I'm tougher on myself, in many ways, than I am on anyone else. But I don't mind that because the main purpose that I had was, I think, achieved.

—Did you write it for yourself?

KAZAN: Of course I did—you can't write for three-and-a-half years for someone else—I mean, they can't pay you that much! My wife said, "What the hell are you doing? When am I going to see you?" And she became, not impatient exactly, more loving actually because she felt I was obsessed with it. And I *was* obsessed with it.

—To understand yourself—was that the principal task? To not only make sense of your life but to know who you were?

KAZAN: Quite right. And how I became what I was, and where I am now.

—You write particularly frankly about yourself and your sexual relations, and I wonder whether that wasn't a difficult thing to

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do—to describe the many women that you've either married or had affairs with. I mean, it's very blunt sexually.

KAZAN: I don't think actually it is. It's the meaning of the word "blunt" that I withdraw from because I don't think what I've said was that; and what I hope I got over in the book was that the affairs had to do with a loving relationship. Many of them were with actresses. I don't think there's any relationship, except marriage and parenthood, that is as close as that between a director and an actor or an actress. It could be either sex. You depend entirely on them; your success depends on their success. Their success is your success and you get so tied up with them that it becomes a very deep thing: you get very concerned, and it often leads into a relationship that's called "an affair". But the word suggests something passing, or a triumph for the male; and that would be foolish. I don't think I was blunt about any of them; and I think I indicated in the book that I am still friendly with a good number of them.

—But there are very few autobiographers who would actually reveal that during a marriage—particularly, in your case, your first, long, happy marriage to your wife, Molly—that they were also engaged in prolonged periods of adultery . . . .

KAZAN: "Adultery" is another word that I shy away from, because it has so many guilt associations to it, and it is as though I am an adulterous man and you, who are questioning me, are not. Maybe you're not. I don't know. But when I say that to people, they have a strange look on their face—the same look you have on your face now. The essential thing is you find that affection often develops into something closer; I don't look on it as though it is some sort of triumph of the male over the female. What you say is true. I did have many affairs but they were not in any way demeaning to the woman: I think it was, more often than not, an equal relationship.

—You emerge, through much of the book, as an extremely angry man: a man possessed, often, by rage at yourself and the world around you.

KAZAN: Well, I got over that by writing. The first question in the book is "Why are you mad?" My wife says this in the morning when she looks at me: my face is all wrinkled up . . . . I'm over that now. I feel the book helped me a lot to do that, for I was angry at a great deal of what happened in my life and also at being the object of a great deal of unfavourable scrutiny. Angry about HUAC, and about what you're talking about now, about the so-called betrayal of my wives—that kind of action. For another, I didn't succeed in efforts I wanted deeply to succeed with, such as a permanent theatre, a repertory theatre. I tried very hard but it didn't work for me. So I felt criticised a great deal.

And I think it started way back when I was a kid because of my relationship to my father. He put me on edge, and he got me feeling that . . . well, I was a hopeless case. He kept saying "Hopeless case" to me, and kidding me that he had expectations from me that I was not going to fulfil, and slowly I developed into an angry boy. I'm well over it now, I think. I'd better be over it! I'm 79 years old—it's time, wouldn't you say?

—You also suggest, at one point, that all artists worth their creative salt are arrogant and vain. And yet you yourself always wanted to be liked, wanted people to be warm towards you.

KAZAN: I am like that. I do want people to warm toward me, especially women, because I've had a close relationship with women—my grandmother, my mother, my grade school teachers, and so on. So I do want to be liked, naturally; but at the same time there is something deeper, which is self-esteem. And, if you start to do what you don't like—buckling under and one thing and another—it doesn't work for you.

—Do you think you've always been an outsider looking into America?

KAZAN: I'm an immigrant. In America that means something very special; or meant it at that time—not any longer. Jimmy Baldwin and I got to be very close friends, and he once gave me a quote for *The Arrangements* it was: "Gadge, baby, you're a nigger too". I did come into this country not speaking the language (into America, I mean). I had to learn it. In school, I was a short, runty kid, I was not part of the dominant crowd. And very slowly, if you have any pride, you release it in anger of some kind, or surliness, or distance, or all of these. I did. And one of the reasons I was psychoanalysed twice was to get it off my back, and to live freely without fear, and confront people freely, and say the truth as much as I can.

BUT DO YOU FEEL *that being an outsider and wanting to be an insider in fact has been the kind of conflict that has enabled you to be immensely successful, both as a Broadway stage-director and as a Hollywood film-director? That you've been able to see things about America in a way that someone who was an insider wouldn't have done?*

KAZAN: That's true. I think the fact that I was an outsider gave me a feeling of allegiance or loyalty or sympathy with the underprivileged or the people who were not at the top. I think that's why I became a member of the Communist Party for a year-and-a-half because I felt sympathy with people who were taking that step. I would say yes, it worked in a lot of my films—I think my understanding of the underdog was important to me.

—Can you think of particular characters in your films where this is particularly the case, where you identified so strongly with the underdog . . .?

KAZAN: A hell of a lot of them, one after the other. Once I got through with my Hollywood period working for Darryl Zanuck, the films I made from then on (which I either started, or helped start, or helped create) were all about that: *On the Waterfront* . . . *Wild River* (which is one of my favourite

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films) . . . *Splendor in the Grass* . . . *America, America*. They are all fuelled by a feeling that the man who made them is seeing things from a point of view not standard in American films. There are no heroes in them, and no glamour figures.

YOU WRITE *in the autobiography immensely candidly about your appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952. I wonder whether you still feel that your stand, the position you took then, is misunderstood in America?*

KAZAN: No, I didn't try to either justify or excuse it or restate it. What I have tried to do was tell exactly what happened; and it goes way back before the testimony, to the first incident that was revealing to me. It was a meeting I had just before I left the Party, where a fellow turned up that I'd never met before, and in front of my whole group . . . .

—This was when you were part of the Group Theatre?

KAZAN: Correct. And criticised me, scolded me, and really shamed me. I went home that night and wrote a letter of resignation . . . .

—. . . from the Party?

KAZAN: Yes, and from then on I began to feel that people were buckling under to the leadership. In a sense, you could say that I was a premature anti-Stalinist. I was against that kind of control—"thought control", and all that. So, I was on edge long before HUAC, the House Committee in Washington, even existed. I felt that nobody was telling the truth, and that made up my mind: I was going to tell the whole truth, so that people would know.

In that I differed from most of my friends. I believe that the US government has a perfect right to enquire into it. I also take exception to the word "witch hunt". The word "witch hunt", which the liberals have put a halo around, means that it's a search into something that doesn't exist. Arthur Miller and Lillian Hellman, *et al.*, didn't stand on platforms in Harlem and make speeches against Cuba's Batista; but I did. I stood on a box and made speeches. I knew what was happening. I went down to 12th Street all the time, to the Communist headquarters, and got instructions . . . got their urging on what I should do, what I should not do.

—Isn't there a difference between on the one hand objecting to the lead that is given by the Communist Party in America by, as you would see it, infiltration into all aspects of individuals' lives by its organisation, and on the other hand actually going before a Congressional Committee and saying the following people were members of the Communist Party when I was in a Party cell at the Group Theatre? Isn't there a difference between "naming names" and expressing your disapproval of the Party by working against it?

KAZAN: You're right. There is a difference, and it is not something that I really look back on with a lot of pride; but I did feel it was necessary then. I felt that was the only way. I also thought that others in the unit would join me. I wish they had. I put the question to myself in the book, as to why they didn't—it was because they were "protecting" the Communist Party, and that was what revolted me. I have regretted it, but I also am proud that I took the step that no one else really did.

—Are you saying that you've never wished that you'd done otherwise?

KAZAN: Well, sometimes I have; but no, not actually. I felt then that there aren't any easy solutions to the political conflicts in our time. I still think there aren't any. But I think you must take one stand or another. Naming names was not very decent. It was "wrong", maybe. Maybe not.

And I never believed that stuff about "There're no Communists here", and all that. On the other hand, I thought Senator Joe McCarthy was a menace. So I was sort of in between the two. I thought there was lying on both sides.

—When you came to make "On the Waterfront", with a script by Budd Schulberg, to what extent was this a riposte, an answer to your liberal critics for what you had done?

KAZAN: I was going to make a film with Arthur Miller about the waterfront; and it was about a unit, a Left unit, in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn.

—But of course it was before you appeared before the Committee that you started working with Miller.

KAZAN: Yes, it was. I've always been interested in that, and when I came around to do it, I was ready. When Schulberg began to work on it, we had met a man before we started, Schulberg and I, who had exactly the same experience we did; and that's described in the book. I went to supper at his house, and he put a pistol on the table—he was protecting his family. And he had had the same kind of experience with the Party, and gradually we said: Well, this is our story. But it is true that, as I worked more and more on it, the fuel and the energy for it came from a feeling that I was talking about myself.

BUT IN *"On the Waterfront" you write that on the first day of shooting, "I knew that morning I was fighting for my professional life". Now, I read that sentence first, clearly, as being about your own artistic standards. But I also read that sentence as you saying you knew when you were making this movie, you and Budd Schulberg—both of whom had been caught up in the events in front of HUAC—knew you were actually fighting for something else: that you were justifying what you felt you had rightly done. Is that the case?*

KAZAN: If I may say so, you're wrong. I meant professional life, not the other. The other didn't bother me, because once I got going and met the people on the waterfront I knew their cause was right.

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THE ONE THING I MISS *throughout that early section of the book, up to 1952, is an exact sense of your own politics. I don't understand why you joined the Communist Party, other than for (as you said) a sympathy for the underdog. I don't understand, indeed, where you stood politically throughout your life. There seems to be something called "Americanism", but not a kind of central political ideology.*

KAZAN: I think "Americanism" is true, and I don't think I had a very strong ideology. I don't think that, basically, I am a political animal. I think I'm a . . . I'm a self-centred animal. I don't think at the time I was in the Communist Party I had true concern for everybody. I think what I was concerned about all my life has been to say something artistically that was uniquely my own. And it ended up in films like *America, America*, and *The Arrangement*, where I was speaking about my own family. So I'm not sure that I am really "a do-gooder". There's not a lot of that in the book. I do have sympathy for people, but I don't think that it is a main cause.

—How would you define "Americanism"?

KAZAN: I have a very strong feeling of Americanism, and I wouldn't necessarily define it any differently than the corniest American politicians define it. I truly love America. It meant everything to me. It gave me standing, and gave me support. I've been in the South and the West and all over, making films everywhere, and I find the people wonderful. They didn't treat me as "an immigrant Greek"; we got along very well. And I love the fact that the politicians praise: that it's a democratic country in the simplest sense of the word. Anybody speaks up, and I've never been afraid . . . once I left the Party. There's the big difference. Once I left the Party I was never afraid to say any damn thing I wanted out loud. I didn't hide anything, and I've never hidden anything since.

YOU DIVIDED *your professional life between the theatre and Hollywood, and I wonder whether I'm right in thinking that, in a sense, your heart really belongs to the theatre, to Broadway?*

KAZAN: No, it does not. It wasn't that I love the theatre as an art—I don't particularly. I'm not like Peter Brook. And it's not that I love the films more than anything else; I don't. What I love is the subjects that concern me. My heart belongs to myself.

—When you look at, perhaps, the three of the best-known American dramatists you were working with in the 1940s and '50s—Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, William Inge—do you have a sense of a series of overlapping themes in their work that attracted you? And why was it to these three dramatists that you kept returning, to direct their work?

KAZAN: I don't know why. I think there's an overlapping feeling in them. A theme perhaps. I don't know.

—In the case of Tennessee Williams and of Miller, both men are also outsiders: Tennessee Williams because of his homosexuality; Arthur Miller perhaps because of his Jewishness and his radical politics. Like you, they're both men looking in on America.

KAZAN: I think that's true. And I think that I was attracted for the reason that they *were* outsiders and that they were—and also said so—uncertain of themselves, if in different ways.

—You write, at one stage, about Miller's "Death of a Salesman", that the play has such a deep value for you because it forced you to understand your parents better.

KAZAN: It did.

—I find that very revealing.

KAZAN: I think it's true that I understood my father better after that. But then I think my father was like Miller's father to a certain extent. There was a problem between him and his father that I also had between myself and my father, whom I did come to understand with more sympathy. Now I have five children, and so I do understand the great burden and the wonderful blessing it is to be a father and love one's children.

—Let me suggest something to you. I see particular links between the plays that you directed on Broadway and the films you made in Hollywood. And it quite simply is this—that often you use the work that you made on the stage or in the cinema, to express what you had actually done, indeed, to justify what you'd done.

Let me give you an example. The last movie that you made was called "The Last Tycoon". Now, here's a film that deals with a clash between a creative force and the studio chief. Aren't you really working out there the conflict, the difficulties, that you had with Darryl Zanuck when you were at Twentieth-Century Fox?

KAZAN: Every film I do, increasingly consciously I would find that I was doing it—and should do it—because it had a theme that meant something to me. I didn't ever work just for the fun of making a picture, or for making money, but because it said something that I wanted to say myself. *On the Waterfront* is the plainest example of it, but all of the others are the same way. Part of *Splendor in the Grass* is about my father and me, and about the puritanism that I was up against. Puritanism was a big *bête noire* in my life, and I got over that. What you say is true.

—One of the themes that seems to link work in the theatre and the cinema is your concern for actors and for the whole business of casting. And I wonder, in whichever medium you're working, whether the director's principal task isn't, in the end, the identification of the right actor for the right role?

KAZAN: Yes, it is. In the theatre, it's very important to get the right actor for the right role, but more important is to find

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your own relationship to the theme and decide that you're really telling a little piece of autobiography, no matter what it's about. Once you've done that, then finding the right actor is important. I found, in the case of a whole group of them in the Actors' Studio, you had to find the actor who corresponds, so that he articulates what you want to articulate.

—What do you feel now about the Actors' Studio and, in particular, about what has been called Lee Strasberg's "method" school of acting?

KAZAN: You know, I'm not as sympathetic as I used to be with it. It has value, but I think that we went too far in stressing the purely psychological nature of acting; there are many other aspects. Some people in the Actors' Studio will be annoyed with me and think I betrayed them a little bit, but I didn't; I think it's a good kick in the tail for them, you know. They've got to speak well—and they don't speak well. They have never had a success with a classic. Never, never once. And there are all kinds of techniques in acting beyond psychological stimulation of yourself. I think it was, in that sense, rather narrow. But at the time it first appeared—when Lee Strasberg and Harold Clurman started it in the Group Theatre and later Robert Lewis and I in the Actors Studio—I think it was tremendously valuable, because it jerked our theatre around and made the actor the centre for a while. I don't feel he's the centre of it any more. I believe the director is.

—Why do you think it is that the American theatre has never achieved that ideal of a repertory company? After all, you yourself briefly ran the Vivian Beaumont Theatre at the Lincoln Center, which was designed to be a repertory company.

KAZAN: And it was disastrous.

—Why has America never achieved a successful repertory company?

KAZAN: Because I don't think we have the tradition you English have, and the tradition you have in London is a very good and important one. Still, I think we influence a lot of British actors. We came over here in 1937 with a play, and later with another—and English actors and English directors came to America and saw our work. But I don't think we have a tradition for words, the weight of words, for wit, for the strength of thorough statement that you people have. We could have learned a lot from the British, if we hadn't gone totally the other way.

—Much of what we've said as we've talked has been about regret. But I don't sense from your autobiography that you are actually a man who regrets anything.

KAZAN: I don't. I don't regret anything. Why look back? I wanted to be out in the world, and have adventures, travel here and there, try a lot of things . . . and I did. I started as an actor, acted in films; then I started as a play director, and then as a film director; and then I wrote six novels, and now I've written an autobiography. And God knows what I'll do next.

Why live only one life? Any time you try something difficult, you take the chance of failure, don't you? As for my last book, when I made up my mind I thought, "It's going to take forever to write". And I said, "Well, to hell with it—I'm going to do it. It's the last chance I have to say what I think, and I'm going to say what I think about everybody . . . ."

And I did, and I feel fine.

Chester

(Paean for a Perfect Idiot)

My favorite American cat is Chester—
and as a favorite he gets American spelling—
and it's in his praise that my organ is swelling!
But he's not the cat that would ever need belling—
he's certainly not a criminal or a crumb
but he *is* a wee bit dumb!

He's genuine, not man-made or polyester
and he's mostly white, with very dark grey splotches—
if he were a fabric, you could match him, in swatches—
but he's far superior, by several notches;
raccoon-tailed, he's completely covered in *real fur*
and he sure knows how to purr!

He's never been a student—not even half a semester—
and his talent isn't for teaching or table-talking
but he's renowned everywhere for his way of walking;
with Tarquin's ravishing strides he goes by, stalking.
There's no need for brains in aristocrats—
Chester's a prize fool among cats!

Gavin Ewart

("Belling the Cat": the old nursery story describes how the mice try to put a bell round the cat's neck, to warn them of his approach. Chester, in fact, belongs to Lincoln Kirstein, and is called after Chester Kallman, Auden's friend. **New York, 1986)**

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THEATRE

The Shakespeare Market

By Malcolm Rutherford

A VISITOR to London in early January 1989 may have been struck by how little Shakespeare was showing in the theatres: only the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Titus Andronicus* at the Barbican, and a commercial production of *Richard II* at the Phoenix, followed by the same company's *Richard III* later in the month. That compares with 13 musicals. Yet the visitor might also have been struck by the fact that it was the musicals that were collapsing, except for the best of them, while the demand for Shakespeare is flourishing—indeed is perhaps rather greater than the market is meeting. *Titus Andronicus* was almost as hard to get into as *The Phantom of the Opera*. *Richard II* was no easier.

The productions of the two Richards were made possible partly by the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts; but that is not quite the same thing as a straight subsidy. The Centre relies on private donations and ticket sales for its activities, and there are entrepreneurs involved at the Phoenix: Duncan Weldon and Jerome Minskoff of Triumph Theatre Productions. These two men are in show business not only because they like it, but also to make money, and why not? The technique is to invest in established titles and established stars, and again why not? For much of the general public, that is what the theatre has always been about.

The principal star in this case is Derek Jacobi, who made his name at the National Theatre, then joined the Royal Shakespeare Company, and has now broken loose—perhaps to become the Shakespearean hero of our time.

Or perhaps not quite yet. The evidence on the basis of the two Richards remains inconclusive. Although the audiences clearly seem to love him, perhaps they love the parts just as much as the man who plays them. It also has to be said that *Richard II* and *Richard III* are, in their different ways, rather special plays and cannot be taken as the definitive test.

Richard II has the advantage, or at least the characteristic, of being much better known and respected as a play than it deserves. One of the reasons for this is that so many people seem to have taken part in it at school, perhaps identified with him and, remember the poetry of the King's literal—and near soliloquies. One would very much like to know the reactions of an intelligent person beyond school age, who had never seen it before and knew nothing about it. For, in the conventional sense of the term, it is not a good play at all. Indeed, it is almost an anti-drama, since it ignores all possibilities for excitement and suspense. It is a vehicle for whoever plays Richard II. No other character much matters.

One may dispute that by saying: What about John of Gaunt? Precisely. It has always been my view—admittedly without direct evidence—that this part was written for some famous actor of the time whose name was bound to pull in the crowds. It is full of fine phrases and splendid verse. The speech about "this sceptr'd isle" entered the anthologies almost as soon as it was written. Yet it does not bear a great deal of proven relationship to the rest of the play and, as the historical scholars of the sources have pointed out, Shakespeare's John of Gaunt is quite unlike the real John of Gaunt, who was a rogue. He reminds one slightly of Polonius in *Hamlet,* who also speaks fine sentiments in memorable, though less solemn, verse, and which some people have taken seriously. Anyway he is out altogether after Act II, Scene I. It is a wonderful bit part, but no more than that: cabaret, not the long haul.

THE REST OF THE characters do not even get that much, and the play has no structure other than the downfall of Richard. Neither in the quality of the verse, which can be so telling about characters in Shakespeare, nor in the evidence presented in the first act is there any guidance about whether Mowbray or Bolingbroke is the more guilty of treachery: nor is there any later clarification. Mowbray disappears from the text almost at once. All we learn afterwards is that he joined the Crusades, fought valiantly, retired to Italy and died in Venice. This news has no dramatic purpose except as a footnote, and no one on stage seems much interested when told.

Bolingbroke is plainly labelled "ambitious" from the start, and we know very early on that he is coming back from his banishment to usurp the throne. But it would be hard to argue from the basis of the text that he has much of a character. He has virtually no memorable lines and speaks mostly in clichés. He is simply the man who takes over while Richard talks himself to death.

There is also a peculiarity in the structure of the play. In the opening scenes it is by no means self-evident that Richard is a bad king, given to gross favouritism. On the contrary, he appears to handle the dispute between Bolingbroke and Mowbray rather well. It is the prerogative of a king to stop the duel between them at the last minute, and the way he does it could look merciful, even statesmanlike. Only later do we learn that his judgment is suspect and that he tends to rely on sycophants (though which kings would not?). Even that revelation (vouchsafed in a few lines in Act I, Scene IV) is somewhat at variance with the rest of the text. It is not that he is a

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bad or even a particularly corrupt king. He is simply out of his depth and begins to accept events as they happen. All the other characters are means to that end. Richard watches himself and his power disintegrate. For anyone else to have much of a role would distract attention from the main scene, which becomes Richard all the way.

THE PHOENIX PRODUCTION, directed by Clifford Williams who is as at home in the history plays as anyone, accepts all that completely. Possibly it takes it too far. For one thing, the production is unnecessarily austere. I know that this is a modern fashion, but it can be taken to the point of distortion. For instance, at the beginning of the play Richard must be at the height of his power and be seen to be so. He presides over a court. When he says: "Our doctors say this is no month to bleed", it is the kind of mild joke that sycophantic courtiers are meant to laugh at, as if it is cleverer than it is. In this production there are no courtiers around, only the named characters in the play. They look like ageing football players, and even dress like them.

That takes an element out of the play that must have been there when it was first written: namely the colour and the glamour and even the power of Richard's court, however infirmly based they may have been. It limits the possibility of dramatic contrast between Richard and Bolingbroke: it is almost as if the director is saying that the sets and the trappings do not matter very much; only Richard counts.

Again, the rest of the characters do not even try to develop their roles. The Queen is a pathetic little thing who looks as if she has been obliged to dress on the cheap and avoid anything bright. That intelligent member of the audience seeing the play for the first time and without prior knowledge, if he or she could be found, would probably have had difficulty in distinguishing the rest of the characters one from another. They are all functionaries. Indeed, since some of the characters drop out early on and others only appear later, some of the actors are the same. And not much attempt is made to conceal it.

All that must be deliberate. The aim is to place as much attention as possible on King Richard and his personal tragedy. But it also places a heavy burden, even if self-imposed, on Derek Jacobi. In a sense, some of the lines and large sections of the speeches, are so indelible that, like Hamlet, almost no one could play the part badly. Jacobi does better than that. Everything that one knew was in the part is there: the pathos, the odd tinge of humour, the sudden changes of mind, the swings between arrogance and humility and, by and large, the poetry. Possibly he is a little too histrionic at times, but only a little. His performance would be enhanced, however, if the rest of the production were more varied. The King has his own light and shade: the others have only shade.

JACOBI'S Richard III seems to begin almost where his Richard II left off: sitting (or in his case lying) on the ground and telling sad stories of the death of kings. There is the same touch of self-pitying hysteria mixed with the occasional playfulness. Yet he is far too good an actor for one to confuse the two performances for long.

Since I saw *Richard III* only in preview, it would be quite wrong to attempt to review it in any way. But there are one or two points about the two plays. By conventional standards *Richard III* is much better. It is better because it has more characters capable of development and more elements of surprise. Almost everything in *Richard II* is predictable and predicted. Large parts of it are monologue, a case history of the King's state of mind. In *Richard III,* however well one knows it, one always wonders in advance how some parts will be played: the little Princes, for example. Some of the women's parts are real, not token, and when you see Richard sexually charming and then caressing the women whose family he has killed and who had begun by denouncing him, there is always a fresh frisson.

To be sure, *Richard III* lacks the poetry and the dignity of *Richard II.* It is a melodrama not a tragedy, and if one had to state a preference, it would be for *Richard II* any day. Still, the Phoenix *Richard II* would gain if it allowed some of the other personae a bit more scope. It needs a splash of garishness, of vulgarity of the kind so copiously available in *Richard III.*

As for Jacobi, and as for Shakespeare in London: we need more. The demand is there. It even pays its way commercially, provided that you have the stars. Economists would call that a supply side problem.

Cryogenics

They thaw slowly, the three trout,
cool scale-bronze under the kitchen light,
rigidly arranged on a flower-pattern plate.
The tight fronds of their fins are stiff and shut.

And the animal bloom of death will rise
from its cold interiors to claim and touch.
First the grey glaze in the shocked eyes.
This also is beautiful. Watch.

C. B. McCully

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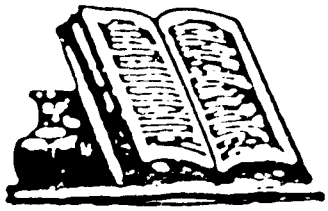
IN THE MARGIN

Revolution & Romanticism

By Anthony Hartley



A SMALL, BUT intriguing, news item relates that a French opera singer, Mlle Hélène Delavault, has been attacked by masked men while performing revolutionary songs to celebrate the bicentenary of the French Revolution. Now, we all know that passions run high in France when it comes to revolutionary history—that and Jeanne d'Arc are the most prickly episodes of France's past—but it seems hard that, on anniversaries, opera singers cannot burst into *Ça ira* or the march of the *Sambre-et-Meuse* without being assaulted.

No doubt, the assailants were unbearably irritated by all those model guillotines and pennons of *tricolore* bunting, those cheap editions of Marat and Robespierre, and those outpourings of political rhetoric with which the *annus mirabilis* is to be celebrated. One can have too much of a good thing—even of a revolutionary anniversary.

Moreover, the stock of revolutions in general has gone down recently, and those who take Burke's (or the Baroness) Orczy's) view of the French model may congratulate themselves. Articles about the great event have been notably critical of what went on. No longer are we asked to accept "the Revolution *en bloc*" or to admire the salutary and virtuous vigour with which the Jacobins dispatched their political opponents. Now the picture is one of an upheaval which went tragically wrong, of a blood-letting that traumatised successive generations of Frenchmen and left France's economy lagging in the rear of its British rival's newly launched industrial revolution.

This has had its effect on historiography. At the beginning of this century, two Sorbonne professors, Aulard and Mathiez, thundering at each other *ex cathedra*, could each choose their preferred regicide—Danton or Robespierre—and do battle for him in the national archives. To espouse the cause of Mirabeau and the moderates would not have occurred to either of them. Mathiez drew a picture of Mirabeau as a corrupt and cynical aristocrat, greedy for royal gold—this perhaps he was, but he was other things as well. Now his latest biographer believes in the disinterestedness of his moderation and finds no contradiction between his private notes to the King and his great speeches in the Assembly. Recent historians have restored him to a place of honour which is some compensation for his corpse's expulsion from the Panthéon in 1793 at the hands of enthusiastic patriots.

"The policy of the National Convention", wrote Charles Péguy, evidently weary of the political rhetoric of the Third Republic, "is Jaurès in a tumbril and a roll of drums to cover that great voice." Saint-Just, indeed, by posing the alternative of "Virtue or Terror" made terror inevitable, since men are not, by nature, virtuous. But there was more to the French Revolution than the Terror, and we are now beginning to look at other aspects of it than the two dramatic years from 10 August 1792 to 27 July 1794 (9 *Thermidor*).

Politically, this was an historical era which began with Mirabeau and ended with Napoleon. But it should not be forgotten that it was also the time that saw the neo-classicism of David's *Oath in the Tennis Court* replaced by the romanticism of Girodet's *Ossian* [of all people!] *receiving the generals of the Republic* or Géricault's prancing cavalrymen and, finally for the revolution of 1830, by the supreme icon of revolt—Delacroix's *Liberty on the Barricades of Paris*. The Revolution continued for 25 years, if we count Napoleon's reign. When it was ended, the change from Neo-Classicism to Romanticism was complete. The 19th century had supplanted the 18th. In France the way was open for Victor Hugo and the generation of 1830. In England and Germany the romantics were launched.

IT IS OF THE NATURE of great historical events to bring with them altered cultural conditions which may express or cause, according to one's point of view, the political upheavals of the time. But this truism apart, there is an obvious suitability in the Romantic movement coming to birth during the French Revolution. For what was Romanticism if not an acute sense of mutability, of the changes wrought by time upon human beings? And what was the Revolution—any revolution perhaps—if not an underlining of the possibilities of sudden transformation inherent in the human condition?

It cannot be said that the English "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 had had much of this exemplary quality. It was, in a way, the point of it that afterwards everything appeared to go on as before. But the French Revolution, with its plundered *châteaux* and palaces, its mob lynchings and stream of public beheadings, set up a pattern of catastrophe and tragic alteration which could convince the wealthiest and most secure of magnates that time was capable of having its way with them.

That consciousness, however, is never without its *frisson* of pleasure. The essence of Romanticism is the ability to appreciate, and even to rejoice in, the succession of experience—spectacles pleasing or distasteful, mystical or sensual, tragic or merely bizarre. The flow of life is to be welcomed regardless of the moral categories into which it falls: *"Enfer ou ciel, qu'importe?"* Like Goethe's Faust, romantic man has only one temptation to which he must not succumb: the temptation of stability, of a beauty that does not pass away. That, indeed, should he be fascinated by it, will destroy the intoxication he inhales from the mobile, the contingent.

Revolution brings with it a new selection of these sensations—terror, cruelty and the fanatical hope that impels a whole society onwards—towards what? This matters little.

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The flight is what matters. Just as romantic love leads to an eroticism where achievement is valued less than the quest for an object of desire, so political and social revolution releases again and again energies directed towards an unattainable satisfaction and the generation of expectations which must content themselves with failure. Perhaps the would-be student revolutionaries of 1968 were not wrong to associate sexual license with their desire to remake society. On the level of human emotions, the one quest is an image of the other. In two novels which touch on the theme of revolution—*Les dieux ont soif* and *L'île des pingouins*—Anatole France presents a final tableau of the dissolution of society and the frantic embraces of lovers. Impermanence again—the Faustian compact with the tempter time.

IT IS, AS THE MARXISTS say, "no accident" that the years of the French Revolution provided the initial setting for a great work of literature which has time for its underlying theme. François-René de Chateaubriand was one of the founders of the Romantic movement in France, forming the taste of a generation in works like *Atala* or *René*. It was he, too, who accommodated Christian themes to the new sensibility of impermanence. But his masterpiece is undoubtedly the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. Written between 1811 and 1841, this record of a turbulent life is pervaded by a melancholy derived from an acute sense of the work of time, whose varying patterns form the underlying structure of the book.

Chateaubriand recounts his own life, but, while dealing with his past, he often describes simultaneously the present in which he is writing. Thus his account of his life as an impoverished royalist refugee in London is written while he is Louis XVIII's Ambassador in the same city. In his great set-piece account of Napoleon's career, the narrative is directed by a knowledge of the future which we know that the writer possesses. Personal relationships are shadowed by an approaching fatality, of which Chateaubriand only became aware later in life. At every point of the book, past, present and future are woven together, combining to produce infinitely diverse nuances of perception. Chateaubriand, before Proust, was the grand artist of time, using its half-tones to create an irony underlying his vision of events and imparting to it significance as a paradigm of the human condition.

After the destruction of the *ancien régime*, Napoleon, the master of the age, provided another example of mutability. In Chateaubriand's narrative we see his flawed greatness gradually succumb to the embrace of time:

> "The peace which Napoleon had not reached with the kings his jailers, he made with myself: like him I was a son of the sea; my birth, like his, was from the rock."

And, after telling of the death of the Emperor who had exiled him, Chateaubriand returns to his own destiny and death:

> "Why have I survived the century and the men to whom I belonged by my life's date? Why did I not fall with my contemporaries, the last of an exhausted race? Why did I alone remain seeking their bones in the shadows and dust of a crowded catacomb? I have lost the heart to continue."

This note of nostalgia is typical. In a letter, Chateaubriand was to write of his visit to Greece: "I regret even the grass of my time!", and the intensity of his desire to retain this shred of the past testifies to his conviction of the world's impermanence. The Romantic is interested, not by the materials from which he has constructed his life—Chateaubriand says remarkably little about his growing mastery of his art—but by what he has lost. He is surrounded by missed opportunities and the tombs of friends.

Did the French Revolution play a part in creating this habit of mind in him? It seems probable. The loss of his family and the destruction of the family manor of Combourg wrenched him from a world of certainties, which he was never to find again. The life of the Chateaubriand family under the *ancien régime* was far from that *douceur de vivre* which, Talleyrand felt, no one would ever know who had not lived before 1789. But the picture of Combourg in the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, with its gloomy feudal manners and its closeness to a nature that was wild enough to be awe-inspiring, is an attractive one. The sources of Chateaubriand's poetic power flowed already in his childhood. His uprooting and the destruction of what he had known cannot but have impressed him with the transitory nature of human life and the inroads made upon it by time.

According to Littré's dictionary the word "revolution" took on its meaning of an "upheaval in human affairs" during the 18th century in the usage of philosophers like Montesquieu or preachers like Fléchier. Before that it was used to describe the motions of the heavenly bodies which mark the passage of time and rain down their influence on earth. Thus "revolution" could be defined as time transformed into destiny for the human beings it affects. It is, so to speak, a "strong" period of history—years into which is crowded an intensity of change, unfelt at other periods.

Was it this type of revolution which created the emphasis on the transitory experience of man to be found in the Romantic movement? Even with all that goes under the name of Pre-Romanticism in the cultural history of 18th-century France, the coincidence of date remains a striking one. Condillac, one of the early users of the word quoted by Littré, had no doubts: "The revolution of opinions follows the revolution of empires." But perhaps one might add, since the readers of ENCOUNTER are intellectuals, confident of the impact of mind on matter, ". . . or the other way round".

In these uncertainties we return to Chateaubriand, whose description of revolutionary change is so convincing, so passionate. Surely, one thinks, he must have been born for this. And in that case the revolution of opinion, accomplished in him and his contemporaries must have preceded the revolution in France. But no. Like other men, he was born into time, and it was the French Revolution which intensified his consciousness of time's instability. From that instability he took refuge in art, where, paradoxically, it was transmuted into permanence. Proust wrote of him:

> "And when Chateaubriand, while lamenting, gives full scope to the marvellous and transcendent personage he is, we smile, for, at the very moment when he says he is prostrate, he escapes, he lives a life where there is no death."

Yes.

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LETTERS

Statistics in Viet Nam

YOUR ANALYSIS and critique of "The Ideas of '68" (ENCOUNTER, November 1988) was entirely convincing to me, except for one conjectural statement which, in my opinion, is very doubtful. Melvin J. Lasky writes (p.9, col.1):

> ". . . the American Negro population (as it was still then called) bore the brunt of the US Army's conscription—and, thus, the burden of the casualties of dead and wounded in South-east Asia."

This was a thesis which was insistently propounded in the '68 anti-war propaganda, and repeating it twenty years after makes it no less questionable. I don't think the matter can be proved, one way or the other. When asked, the US military authorities in Viet Nam would always say that they "did not keep records by race. . . ." So there is no official source.

When I was covering the war in Viet Nam for European newspapers and magazines, I used to try to do a rough check. All I could do was "count noses" among the combat troops and support units. I once was busy for five hours, doing a spot check at Danang Air Terminal, the point of exit and entry for most of the troops. They invariably came out at 10%-14% of a unit, just about the same proportion in the general US population. This evidence is, I admit, sporadic, anecdotal, and unreliable.

But at least my amateurish survey was not guided by any attempt to make a point. The almost equally anecdotal, sporadic, and unreliable evidence cited by special pleaders was, however, based on just that—special pleading.

JOHN VAN ALLAN

New York City

The Will of "the Masses"?

DONALD MORRIS (ENCOUNTER, Letters, May 1988), maintains that:

> "In Communist terminology . . . 'democratic' simply means that 'the people own the means of production'—i.e. all industry has been nationalised and is controlled by the state."

This contention, although on the right lines, is still subtly wrong. Certainly Communists, when they are speaking honestly to fellow-Communists, do employ the word "democratic" to refer solely to states in which everything is in fact nationalised—states where the supreme stated aim of the British Labour Party, embodied in Clause IV of its Constitution, has already been achieved.

But then, for Communists, the actually intended meaning of this key word is that (the administration of these states being in Communist hands) the Party is furthering not the ephemeral and often misinformed will, but the ultimate interests of the peoples of those states. Total nationalisation is only the supposed necessary means to that professed end.

The nerve and crucial relevance of the distinction was made memorably clear by János Kádár, addressing the Hungarian National Assembly on 11 May 1957, the year after the ever-ready Soviet tanks of imperial "normalisation" first installed him in office:

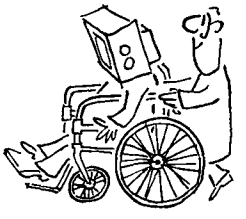
> "The task of the leaders is not to put into effect the wishes and will of the masses . . . the task of the leaders is to accomplish the interests of the masses. Why do I differentiate between the will and the interests of the masses? In the recent past we have encountered the phenomenon of certain categories of workers acting against their interests."

ANTONY FLEW

Reading

Lord Reith's Spoons

The White Paper on Broadcasting—By IAN MCINTYRE



"THE LOUDER he talked of his honour, the faster we counted our spoons". Emerson needs to be updated. Politicians don't talk about honour very much any more. The thing to cultivate a reputation for in these tricky days is "flexibility".

At a rough estimate, the word occurs 19 times in the government's plans for the future of broadcasting which the Home Secretary presented to Parliament recently, and that was about 18 times too many. I have now read the wretched document three times, and on each occasion my heart has sunk inflexibly into my boots. *M*'s column in your February 1989 issue, however, seems unduly sanguine about the future of broadcasting in Britain.

The White Paper doffs its cap to quality in broadcasting here and there, but its authors are clearly very unsure about the road they are urging us down. On the first page of the document, for instance, they stop short of asserting that there is no contradiction between the desire to increase competition and widen choice and concern that programme standards on good taste and decency should be maintained—the Government, we are told, is clear only that there *need* be no such contradiction.

The Government claims that in the brave new world of swarming Multipoint Video Distribution Systems, their proposals preserve strong elements of continuity. If that is so, they should explain why it is thought necessary to dismantle the Independent Broadcasting Authority and put in its place a body called the Independent Television Commission. It would be cheaper and much less confusing simply to redefine the role of the IBA in the forthcoming legislation and invite it to apply its considerable experience and expertise to the new tasks in hand.

The document also lays claim to being radical, and so it is, but only in the way that Mr Gladstone was being radical when he took his axe to the roots of trees at Hawarden. The plain fact is that the proposals set out here would mean the end of public service broadcasting. The BBC will slowly dematerialise, like the smile on the face of the Cheshire cat. To find Douglas Hurd at the head of the Visigoth faction inside the cabinet is something I had not thought to see.

I am not one of nature's cross-benchers, and I find myself in unaccustomed company in saying all this. When I rejoined the staff of the BBC in the mid-seventies, after an absence of some years, I sometimes felt that I was in a foreign country. I subscribe in a general way to many of the things the White Paper says about the merits of competition and choice, and yet the broad thrust of what I read there makes for deep despondency.

THERE HAS BEEN speculation about how much the Home Secretary's elbow was jogged by Lord Young as he penned successive drafts of this paper. The text is certainly liberally laced with a good deal of unlovely DTI-speak, and for all its emphasis on lightness of touch and the removal of regulations, it is in many ways a very doctrinaire piece of work.

There is a notable example of this in the chapter about transmission arrangements. I don't quarrel unduly with the separation of service delivery from service provision (that's how Independent

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Television has operated for more than 30 years, after all), but for these tight little islands the ultimate aim, which is declared to be "a regionally based privatised system designed to promote competition", is positively mind-boggling. What do they think they are trying to do—deregulate the North American telephone system?

THE PRIME MINISTER is said to have taken a close interest in the White Paper as it made its slow way to the Government printer. I wonder what she made of the sentence which assures us that "as delivery systems proliferate, national frontiers begin to blur or disappear"?

If I drank a large malt whisky, allowed my critical faculties to slip into neutral and spoke rather quickly, I suppose it might just be possible to equip the proposals with some sort of philosophical pedigree.

When, for instance, Max Beloff was making the case for an independent university, he wrote that it was the British boast that each generation was capable of adding to our range of native independent institutions—the medieval guilds, the great trading companies of the 17th century, the public schools two centuries later. The British state was traditionally an external guarantor of a free society, not the universal provider of modern times. . . . Ah, well, there are some things even malt whisky can't do.

The most depressing thing about the White Paper is that although its proposals will eventually mean the end of public service broadcasting, it is plain that its authors do not really know what public service broadcasting is. As I plodded through their dull pages I had a mental picture of some great library being sacked by a horde of cheerful little green men.

The BBC, we are told, "will continue as the cornerstone of public service broadcasting", but that is like saying that the Bank of England will continue to be the cornerstone of the Bank of England—the statement is inherently nonsensical.

The present constitutional position is that the BBC is the national instrument of broadcasting and, for better or worse, the *only* provider of public service broadcasting we have. It may occasionally fall down on the job, and Independent Television may frequently produce excellent programmes, but that does not turn them into public service broadcasters.

Let me attempt a definition of the species, if only to assist the monumental masons who will have to carve the memorial. Public service broadcasting serves the nation. Because it exists to offer something to everybody, it is appropriate that everybody should share in supporting it, and it is therefore by definition financed from the public purse. Other things being equal, this is not a reason for Conservatives to dislike it, or for Socialists to entertain proprietary feelings towards it.

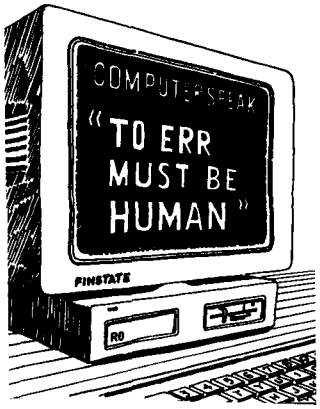
It is not a nationalised industry or a public utility. It can serve democratic purposes, but that is incidental. In the strictest and best sense it is a republican institution—although that in turn is not something that should give offence to intelligent royalists. Its contract with the nation stipulates that it should enjoy independence—from government, from party, from commercial or sectional interest.

Foreigners admire it almost as much as it admires itself. There have been as many attempts to reproduce it as there have been to imitate the proceedings of Westminster. It is not, naturally, essential to human happiness. The United States have managed very well without it, the Dutch have complicated arrangements of their own, French civilisation offers alternative compensations.

I have, of course, omitted one part of the definition. It is a crucial part, however, and I suspect it explains why things have now come to such a pretty

Computer Rules, Okay?

New York



THOSE OF **us who write might agree that we need all the help we can get. My thought today is to beware of help that may hinder.**

In a recent Atlantic Monthly, Barbara Wallraff describes today's "literate computers". These are the programs that undertake to analyse and improve a writer's style. The danger is that inexperienced writers may take these computerised suggestions and recommendations as gospel.

Some months ago the creators of a program called "*RightWriter*" sent me a review copy of their brainchild. The accompanying press release explained that the program uses "over 3,000 rules" to make its recommendations.

THREE THOUSAND RULES? *Horsefeathers! English composition may have 15 or 20 "rules". Proper nouns must be capitalised. Declarative sentences must end with a period. Subject and verb must agree in number. That sort of thing. But there is no rule against beginning a sentence with "but". No rule controls the placement of a comma. There is no rule on split infinitives, article adjectives, sentence-ending prepositions, or sentence fragments.*

OUT OF CURIOSITY, **I submitted one of my recent columns to the pedantry of "*RightWriter*". The column dealt with a case that was argued before the US Supreme Court.**

I had written that "*the Question before the High Court is a close one*". "*RightWriter*" rapped my knuckles. "Replace '*is a close one*'", it decreed, "with '*is close*'". Fiddlesticks! The word "close", standing alone, invites a flickering doubt: Close to what?

In one paragraph I had a sentence of 26 words. The program is rigged to flag every sentence of more than 22 words as suspiciously long. What rubbish! If a limit of 22 words is one those precious 3,000 "rules", we should be wary of the other 2,999.

TOWARD THE END *of my column, having summarised both sides of the argument, I inquired rhetorically:* **"What about it?"** *The computer coldly informed me: "Not a complete sentence." So what?*

Completing its analysis, the computer asked me to reconsider certain **"uncommon words".** *Among the "uncommon words" that might be confusing were:*

"affirmed . . . cocaine . . . amendment . . . casual . . . criminal . . . supreme . . . universal . . . lawyer . . . telltale . . . cops. . . ."

IN THEIR PROPER PLACE—*as aids to the writers of simple, straightforward prose—these infuriating disks may be useful. For those who mean to write above the sixth-grade level, they may do more harm than good. Oops!* **"Cliché!"**

James J. Kilpatrick

JAMES J. KILPATRICK *is a Times-Mirror columnist for "Newsday" in New York.*

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pass. Public service broadcasting must rest on a broad national consensus about what its purposes should be. Perhaps the government is doing no more than recognising that such a consensus no longer exists.

THERE ARE THOSE who will say that the BBC asked for it. So it did in many ways, but that does not make it less of a pity. It will not happen dramatically overnight, but what the government has now decided on for the House that Reith built is a secular equivalent of the dissolution of the monasteries in slow motion.

Reith was an engineer by training, and in his day he knew quite as much about the technology as any of the whizz-kids in Lord Young's Department of Enterprise. On his last evening with the BBC he had himself driven up to Droitwich so that he could switch off the transmitters.

His engineering expertise, however, did not stop him from being highly perceptive in matters of programme policy—"give them a lot of what they like", he said, "and a little of what they *might* like if they knew it existed."

That is the dimension which is missing in Mr Hurd's White Paper—there is no trace of any coherent concern for editorial substance. Such discussion as there is of editorial matters is on the level one would expect to encounter in an amusement arcade.

It is a poor defence to say that the intention is only to offer an enabling framework. To announce that one proposes to collaborate with what has become technologically inevitable hardly adds up to a statement of policy.

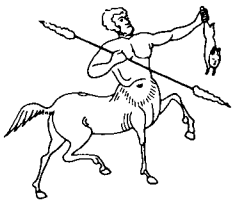
I shall go on counting the spoons—although in the spirit of the White Paper, I shall do it as flexibly as possible.

IAN MCINTYRE

Radlett
Hertfordshire

Who Will Translate the Professors?

A Reply to Roy Harris—By PETER JONES



I FEEL AS IF I have just emerged from the imperial sauna where, wreathed in impenetrable mists of hot air, sits the Emperor without any clothes on. But I am perfectly willing to be convinced that the fog is of my own making. Let me make three points which, in so far as I can understand what Professor Harris has written ("Who Will Translate the Translators?", ENCOUNTER, February), may clarify my position and advance what argument there is.

First, Professor Harris is under a misapprehension if he believes that I think that "correct translation has already been settled once and for all . . . by Europe's great lexicographers". I do not believe such a thing: I have never said such a thing. I assumed that all ENCOUNTER readers would regard translation, as I do, as a matter of approximation. What I did argue was that on occasions it is possible to demonstrate, on linguistic grounds, that a translation is *wrong*. It strikes me as somewhat odd that a Professor of General Linguistics, committed to intellectual enquiry (as he says, presumably of himself), should dismiss as a mere "pedagogic exercise" an enquiry into whether a piece of Greek means what the translator claims it to mean.

Second, Professor Harris announces there are new criteria for translation: criteria which appear to dismiss the original as irrelevant ("talk about 'what the Greek says' in English is just nonsense, and consequently affords no coherent basis for translation criticism of any kind"). But he does not describe these criteria, nor under what conditions he would proclaim a translation to be successful. We are agog to know what they are, and to hear how far his discussions of Plato, Aristotle, St Augustine, J. G. Herder, and Saussure represent what they said—or not.

Third, Professor Harris counters my contention (against his *Times Literary Supplement* piece) that translators are still trying to represent the original with the following eye-watering argument.

1. Such matters are not empirical issues anyway.

2. All things are changing.

3. Therefore translation theory is changing.

PERHAPS I HAVE misunderstood his reasoning. I make two obvious points. First, the matter *is* empirical. Anyone sufficiently committed to intellectual enquiry has translators and translations to consult: neither is a disembodied concept floating about in a Platonic wonderland. Second, even if it is true that all things are changing, so that translation theory is changing too, that is beside the point. The question was: are things changing in such a way that translators no longer try to represent the original?

If anyone is interested in the guess of a ranting schoolmaster, I should argue that Saussure has *in fact* had an important influence upon translation practice, but in the opposite way to Professor Harris's diagnosis. As a result of the structuralist movement, translators are that much more aware of the problems of cultural and linguistic difference, and to that extent better equipped to try—as far as they can—to represent the original more accurately.

This is all heavy going, but I do have genuine difficulty in understanding Professor Harris's prose. It is as if we were discussing "eating" and he began to talk in such a way as to convince me (however wrongly) that by "eating" he meant "stuffing food in your socks". Rant he never so much, the schoolmaster does actually seek enlightenment from the Professor. But I would be grateful if he kept it simple, with examples.

PETER JONES

University of Newcastle
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

The Movie was the Message

I was fascinated by Melvin J. Lasky's concluding suggestion in his "Ideas of '68" article (ENCOUNTER, November) that Hollywood films, such as *Viva Maria!* played a direct psychological role in the motivations of radical student leaders like Rudi Dutschke and others.

In connection with this, one should also note the scene in the Daniel Cohn-Bendit documentary film about his old beloved Revolution. I saw the series on British television (Channel 4, naturally), and it recorded an important remark of a youngish Italian terroristic professor. He confessed that the dream of revolution was fed by, and patterned on, the famous gangster films (*Bonnie & Clyde*, among them) where you would sit comfortably in a cinema seat, get excited by a lot of shooting, victims falling on all sides. . . . But when the smoke had settled, and the lights went on, everybody was still alive and strolling out of a movie and into reality, ready for a brandy or some other nice night-cap. This was his confession in jail, explaining how his terrorist group drifted into killing Aldo Moro. The celluloid was the message.

ANDRÉ NUGENT

Paris

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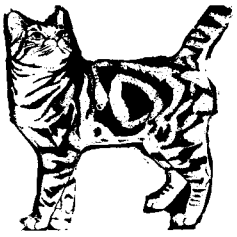
Life & Letters Today

London



THE CAT'S CREAM: **Whatever doubts T. S. Eliot's widow Valerie might have had, when she handed over the rights of her husband's "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats" to Andrew Lloyd Webber eight years ago, I'm sure they have long disappeared. She is entitled to 3¼% of the "Cats" weekly box office gross worldwide and by a rough calculation Mrs Eliot has made an astonishing £12 million from the show.**

DAILY MAIL

Oxford

WHERE THE TRUTH LIES: *Sir Robert Armstrong's phrase in Sydney, "being economical with the truth", is already being spoken of as a candidate for inclusion in future anthologies of quotations. Credit (if that is the right word) for the notion should at least be shared with the British statesman, W. E. Forster.*

Recording his impressions of a conversation in 1877 with the Russian diplomat, Count Nicholas Ignatiev, Forster was suspicious that Ignatiev's frankness was far from genuine, and was driven (more reluctantly than Sir Robert, one imagines) to reflect (T. Wemyss Reid, "Life", ii [1888], p. 167):

> **"What is the use of lying, when truth, well distributed, serves the same purpose?"**

THE TIMES

Frankfurt-am-Main

ANIMAL OLYMPICS? **Our German results in the Seoul Olympics were very good [Johannes Gross writes]. We excelled in fencing, horseback riding, and rifle shooting. But not in any of the animal-like varieties of sport. It is not the place of human beings to compete with the greyhound, the shark, or the kangaroo, at least not a matter for the distinguished nations of Christendom.**

FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

California

OMEN: *The acronym "OOOOPS", for the myriad disasters that could happen if terrorists got hold of nuclear or chemical weapons, has been coined by Gregory Fossedal, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. OOOOPS stands for* **"Ominous Outcomes Ordinanced or Otherwise: Possible Scenarios."**

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Brussels

LINGUISTICS: **The hearing continues in Brussels of 26 Britons at the Heysel disaster trial. At the European Football Cup final (in May 1985), 39 spectators, mostly supporters of the Italian soccer club, Juventus, died after Liverpool fans ran amok. The defence lawyers, charging that it is a heady mixture of melodrama and farce, are threatening to quit.**

There is no simultaneous translation. A team of five interpreters has to circulate among the defendants and their English lawyers, "whispering" a précis of proceedings.

"They're all talking foreign", a Liverpudlian complained.

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

London

CONTINENTAL SHELF: *Following my earlier note about the request for a book on* **Urdu** *being confused with a text on hairdressing, I am told of the story of a woman who asked whether there were any books on* **Euthanasia** *at an Ipswich library. The assistant paused for a moment and then replied: "No, but I believe we have a book called 'Young Man in India'."*

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Washington, D.C.

HEADLINES: **The subject of Howard Nemerov's first talk as US poet laureate, given at the Library of Congress, was "Poetry and Nonsense". Mr Nemerov said newspaper headlines had inspired him to address the subject of nonsense in a poetical fashion.** "SUMMIT REACHES ITS PEAK" **was a favourite Nemerov headline and** "TEAR GAS USED ON MOURNERS" **was another.**

WASHINGTON POST

Dublin

WOOLLY TALE: *Politicians in the Republic of Ireland have been counting sheep to discover that almost half a million are missing. Agriculture officials in Dublin are now being asked to explain why they paid millions of pounds in grants for 400,000 sheep which, according to statistics, do not exist.*

The suspicion is that the missing sheep crossed the border from Northern Ireland to qualify for the grants, and then crossed back again. Indeed, at a meeting at the Dail, an opposition deputy has claimed that because of the number of north-south crossings they had made, sheep along the Irish border are now "suffering from vertigo".

THE INDEPENDENT

New York City

SHOME MISHTAKE SHURELY: ENCOUNTER, **the Anglo-American journal of culture and politics, has moved from "moderate" left to "moderate" right in the last decade. And so, if one can judge by a recent poll, have its readers. 53% of them, for example, take a sceptical view of Mr Gorbachov's *glasnost* and *perestroika*, claiming that Western attitudes to these have been "too adulatory."**

It is disappointing, therefore, that their attitudes to Ronald Reagan's Presidency remain so niggardly. Only 10% thought he would have a long-term effect on his country's well-being, compared to 62% who said the same for Mrs Thatcher and 31% for Gorbachov. We can see three possible explanations. The first is that ENCOUNTER**'s readers are right, and that, like our own Joe Sobran, they see the Reagan years as a pleasant conservative interregnum between two long drifts to liberalism. The second explanation might be snobbery: Europeans continue to neglect the President's real achievements because of their fixation on his "trigger-happy cowboy" image.**

And the third is that these opinions should be read in the light of the poll's further finding that 73% of ENCOUNTER**'s readers drink wine, 64% Scotch, 53% sherry, and 49% gin—adding up to an impressive 239%!**

NATIONAL REVIEW

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MATTERS MEDIEVAL

The Medieval Imagination
JACQUES LE GOFF

Translated by Arthur Goldhammer

The brilliant *Annales* historian recreates the mental structures of medieval people by interpreting the visible images and symbols that their world encompassed. He analyzes the symbols of power, such as flags and oriflammes, and the marvels, devils, and dreams that reveal the medieval mind and that conditioned its actions.

England and the Crusades, 1095-1588
CHRISTOPHER TYERMAN

"This book is not intended as a history of the Crusades with English subtitles," writes Tyerman in his lively style. Rather, he has focused on the extent to which crusading impinged on ordinary English life: its impact on social mobility, the economy, common law, and the fortunes of individual families and of whole communities – most notoriously those of English Jewry.

The University of Chicago Press

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